ROXOBEL.

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AUTHOR OF

"*LITTLE HENRY AND HIS BEARER*," &c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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PREFACE.

THE writer of the following memoirs has been convinced, by a long and uninterrupted intercourse with young people, that so decided a reluctance is generally felt by them to the consideration of any subject which presents itself in a dry and unentertaining form, that few will voluntarily adopt a course of serious reading; whereas, the same topics, when enwrapped in a more inviting exterior, may not only become acceptable, but, like salutary drugs mingled with honey, may be blessed to the constitution when the accompanying sweetness has passed from the palate. Influenced by these considerations, the au-

thoress has attempted, in numerous instances, to clothe the most serious and important lessons in such various and alluring attire as she thought best calculated to captivate the attention of the young and the thoughtless; and she is both gratified and encouraged by the reflection, that her efforts for this purpose have not been in vain. Proceeding upon a more extended scale, she has at length been induced to imagine such a narrative as might, in its progress, give her an opportunity of shewing how a Christian ought to act in the various situations of *brother*, *husband*, *father*, *servant*, and *master*, —of exemplifying the most beautiful forms of the *female character* under various and trying circumstances,—and of exhibiting a specimen of that most rare, and perhaps least understood of human characters,—the exalted, the disinterested, the warm and tender *friend*. It has also been the intention of the authoress to display the chequered nature of human affairs, and their dependence upon the wise appointments of a gracious Providence.

Perhaps it may add to the interest of the narrative, to acquaint the reader, that the manners are such as really existed between forty and fifty years ago, in the more retired parts of England; and that many of the characters have been taken from real life, though not from persons now living. Human nature, however, is the same in all ages, and in all countries; and it is only in the drapery and the decorations that the portraits of past times differ from those of the present.

The writer is aware that an extended narrative, which, if natural, must embrace various stages and conditions of human life, is rejected by many worthy persons, as not being a desirable mode of conveying instruction: and there can be no question, but that this form of composition, invested as it is with peculiar attractions, has often been rendered an exceedingly powerful engine in the hands of the evil one. But, because an engine is powerful, should it, merely on that account, be relinquished to the foe? And if some have been busy in

directing this engine against the bulwarks of religion and morality, should others refuse to use it in the cause of godliness? Had the writer been of this way of thinking, the accompanying volumes would not have been presented to the public. She cannot, however, thus dismiss them, without adding her humble petition, that the divine blessing may attend the holy lessons which she has endeavoured to mingle with her narrative, as threads of gold in a homely web.



ROXOBEL.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

IT is now scarcely twelve months since I was deprived, by death, of a friend who, for the last fifteen years, has contributed more largely to my happiness, and more decidedly, I trust, to my spiritual good and intellectual improvement, than any human being I ever have been, or ever can hope to be associated with in this world of mingled good and evil.

I was a young man just entered into the ministry when I first was honoured with his notice, and, I rejoice to say, that, from the

period of our first acquaintance till the moment of our separation, there was not one interruption of the even and delightful tenor of our friendly and, to me, highly improving intercourse.

The beloved individual of whom I am speaking, was, had he been measured by line and rule as a tailor would measure his customer, one of the least, and, altogether, most minute of any individual of the human race, not exactly counted a dwarf, with whom I ever met, although he rose in the scale of real greatness above all persons I ever knew, when the sterling qualities of his mind and heart were duly appreciated; for, assuredly, no mortal man was ever elevated like this man above the meaner passions with which our nature is so frequently and so unhappily exercised. But, strange to say, long as he dwelt with us at Roxobel, we never knew his parentage, nor whence he came, nor his reasons for remaining with us. It is more than twenty-five years since he first appeared in our beautiful village, and, as he was a total stranger when he took up his abode there,

no one, at that time, thought himself entitled to ask any questions respecting his former life: for, though he did not pretend to any mystery, yet, as he was never known, excepting in a very few instances, to make any allusions to his past experience, it became a point of delicacy among some of us, and a feeling of superstitious dread among others, (for we are mighty lovers of the marvellous at Roxobel, as will be hereafter seen,) never to put any questions to him relative to these matters. We were not, however, without our curiosity, neither did we spare our conjectures; but, as he was often seen to write, and as these writings were known to be committed to a safe repository in his chamber, we had no doubt but that, through their means, the mystery would some time or other be developed. But when we came to examine these manuscripts, soon after the death of the beloved writer, we found much that interested us, indeed, but nothing which had the slightest reference to the family history of our departed friend. Neither was any thing of this nature betrayed by his will.

All his property, which was very large, had been invested in the funds under the name by which he went with us: and as he had been the most generous of men while living, he gladdened many honest hearts by the manner in which he bequeathed an almost princely fortune, after his death, to his friends in Roxobel.

The name which was written on his trunks, when he first arrived at Roxobel, and that by which the few letters he received were directed, was Henry Airley; and he, of course, always went with us by that appellation. Yet we were led to doubt whether this was his real name, from his having once been observed, when signing a paper in haste, to have written another, which he instantly defaced, not without some signs of perturbation.

But what signifies a name, though many have sold their souls and bodies for a name? Names are but empty sounds, and are often as ill bestowed as ill deserved.

But to enlarge no further on this subject. Henry Airley was the name by which this our departed friend was ever

designated at Roxobel; and, sometimes, we (that is, all those among us who could be supposed to understand the allusion) were accustomed to call him Ariel, a name that he merited more than any corporeal being who had ever fallen under our notice, from the remarkable vivacity of his manner, his extreme activity, the graceful airiness of his deportment, and the purity, sportiveness, and elegance, of his conversation; added to the custom he had of being every where, and knowing every thing, so that it was impossible to say, when and where, through all the lovely and various regions of Roxobel, one might be assured that our Ariel was not at hand. He often used to remind me of the song

> "Where the bee sucks, there am I,
> In the cowslip's bell I lie," &c.

I have hinted before, that he would not have required many ells to make him a coat. He was, in fact, the smallest man I ever saw; being almost a dwarf: yet he was perfectly formed, and, though he

must have been more than forty when I first knew him, he wanted nothing but dimensions to render him the handsomest man I ever beheld. His features were perfectly regular and beautiful, his eyes were of a dark blue, and their expression was, on ordinary occasions, so peculiarly mild and innocent, that strangers seldom attributed to their owner that strength of intellect, and those other powers of mind, which he undoubtedly possessed in a degree beyond what commonly falls to the lot of man. His hair grew gracefully on his brow, and naturally formed those flowing lines wherein chiefly consists the beauty of that natural crown; his mouth was small, his teeth white and regular, and when he smiled, every feature seemed to be illuminated with a heavenly radiance. His eyebrows were finely arched, and he possessed, in a remarkable degree, that fine contour of the head and shoulders which seems to be so peculiarly appropriate to the embellishment of the royal or heroic figure.

I never entertained a doubt, from a cer-

tain unstudied grandeur in his manner, that he was not only conscious of noble birth, but that he had associated with the first orders of his fellow-creatures; though what his motives could have been for withdrawing from his own family and from society, I never could conjecture, unless it had happened that he had met with a disappointment in some case in which his heart was engaged. This, however, was matter of mere speculation: for we had no certain grounds for any of our conjectures. I shall therefore leave it to his own papers to account for his appearance in our sweet village, and also to describe his manner of living. Suffice it to say, that Roxobel was blessed with his presence for more than twenty-five years, and that, at his funeral, it might have been rationally supposed that each person present had lost the dearest friend he possessed on earth.

Ah! poor Roxobel! Sad, indeed, was the day when the friendly stranger was committed to the dust, amid thy bereaved and weeping children! What eye was

dry, on that melancholy day, through all thy habitations?

How is he missed in his usual haunts! —on the down, on the heathy hill, on the sunny lawn, in the wood-side path, on the door-sill of the poor, near the cradle of the orphan, by the bed of the dying!

Where again shall we find a man so holy, so devoted, so generous, so active, so self-denying, as this our friend? Where shall we find a character so far purified from the corruptions of the natural man, as that which our departed friend was enabled to exhibit through the long course of twenty-five years, in which, as I said before, our village was blessed with his presence?

But, inasmuch as his character, in all its beauty, simplicity, and Christian perfection, will reveal itself in the narrative which I am about to present to the public, I shall conclude what I have now to say, in the beautiful lines of Goldsmith—

"Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
And e'en his failings lean'd to virtue's side."

CHAPTER II.

SNOWDON.

Being the first memorandum, in point of date, which was found among the papers of Henry Ailey.

August 4th 1643.

MY object, this morning, was to visit the heights of Snowdon, "whence," as the poet says, "are seen

Rivers, and woods, and towns, and verdant vales,
Misshapen mountains, deep embosom'd lakes,
And solemn seas, and dim discover'd shores;"

but, arriving at a cottage, about midway up the mountain, we were compelled to take shelter from a heavy shower which continued some hours; and when it terminated, the day was too far spent to allow me to

effect my purpose. I was alone with my guide, of whom I enquired whether there might not be some place of entertainment at no great distance, where I might find shelter for the night. Such a place was described to me as being in another direction of the mountain-path; and, after about an hour's walk, we arrived at a thatched cabin, situate in a hollow of the hill, low, but of tolerably large dimensions, having a few cottages in its vicinity, and exhibiting on its front a sign which, though weatherbeaten, was a sufficient indication of the designation of the mansion.

It was about five o'clock when we came to the door of this little inn, and were introduced into a kitchen where a turf fire was blazing under a wide chimney, a tolerably clean-looking woman, though without shoes or stockings, being busy about certain culinary preparations which already began to emit no unpleasing savour.

It was, however, with no hospitable eye that she looked upon us; and when my guide asked her if we could have a lodging and supper, she answered him in Welsh; of

which language I just understood enough to make me sensible that our visit was not well timed.

It is pretended that our Cambrian neighbours are occasionally somewhat choleric, and my guide (who, by the by, was not much taller than myself, although he would undoubtedly have required twice as much material to have made him a coat) began to threaten and foam at the mouth at this offence, and was turning out of the house in dire resentment, at the hazard of causing me to spend the night on the bare heath, when the good woman called after us, telling us, that if we would walk upon the hill for an hour or two, her supper would then be ready, and she would endeavour to provide me with a bed in the corner of the kitchen; adding, that, as I was but a little one, any bit of a place would do for me. And here again I was brought to make a reflection, which had often occurred to me before, that although persons of very small stature are frequently exposed to a sort of ridicule which they may not relish, yet they are as frequently made the objects of kindness

for the same cause; especially, if they can submit themselves cheerfully to the misfortune of being somewhat singular; which certainly is a misfortune, as it draws after it many inconveniences more than at first sight appear. Hence those who have nothing peculiar in their persons have reason to be grateful; though this, like other ordinary benefits, is seldom, if ever, duly appreciated.

With the hope, therefore, of a comfortable cradle in the corner of Mrs. Gwynne's kitchen, and of a good supper before I retired to rest, I left the cabin, with my guide, to spend two hours more on the mountain. I, however, did not bargain for a tremendous shower which overtook me just as I had, for the second time, obtained a view of my inn. Nevertheless, I made my way through the pelting rain, and arrived at the door just as my hostess was in the very heat and fever of her culinary preparations. Various kettles were hanging over the fire, and the good woman was preparing to fry some eggs with certain rashers of bacon.

The operations of Mrs. Gwynne were somewhat arrested by my entrance. She immediately set down her frying-pan, and, taking up a three-legged stool, and hoisting it over my head into a corner of the wide chimney, she directed me to pull off my coat, and to seat myself there; then, receiving the garment from me, and throwing over my shoulders a blue cloth cloak which she had taken from a peg on the wall, she bade me keep myself quiet, and get my shoes and stockings dry.

I make a point of taking things as I suppose them to be meant, especially when I imagine that any thing like kindness is intended. I therefore did as desired, enveloping my limbs in the mantle, and stretching out my short legs towards the fire; at the same time, using certain grimaces, by which, as I had intended, I set a host of little bare-legged, fair-haired children, who were huddling together in the other corner of the chimney, into such a loud burst of merriment, that, together with the hissings and bubblings of the various articles which were submitted to the operations of the fire,

and the pattering of the rain against the cabin windows, we actually drowned the voice of Mrs. Gwynne, who was vainly attempting to issue some orders to another female busied in the corner of the kitchen.

As might be expected, I received a very severe reprimand for exciting this uproar, and the choleric mother drove the little urchins one and all out of the apartment, though, by the by, they all re-appeared in a short time, creeping in one by one, being allured, no doubt, by the savoury smell of the viands which were nearly ready to be served up.

I had now leisure to look round me. The kitchen, in the corner of which I was ensconced in my blue cloak, was a large room, mud-built, and blackened with smoke. Opening into this apartment, in different directions, were several doors, one of which seemed to lead into a kind of parlour, from which several voices proceeded, and where I supposed the company to be assembled who were to partake of the dainties which the busy dame was preparing. Near this door was the foot of a sort of ladder

or staircase which led to the upper rooms. In the centre of the kitchen was a rude table, and the rest of the apartment exhibited a scene of such disorderly confusion as is generally to be found in the houses of the slovenly poor. A red-armed, barefooted wench, with cheeks like John-apples, and eyes like glass beads, was bustling in and out of the parlour, setting the table, as I supposed from the directions given to her from time to time by Mrs. Gwynne, who interlarded her injunctions with much abuse and many pathetic exclamations at the lefthandedness of the damsel.

"You have your house full, Mrs. Gwynne," I at length ventured to remark. "Some persons of consequence, I suppose?"

"There is no other comes here," was her answer, in a tone which conveyed an idea to my mind that I might as well sit still like a good boy, and ask no questions.

A few minutes after this I began to finger my coat, which hung by my side on the back of a chair, with the intention of put-

ting it on, if it should be sufficiently aired: but my hostess, perceiving my intentions, twitched it off the chair, and swinging it up upon a hook at the top of the kitchen, far above my reach unless I had mounted on the table, she bade me be quiet; adding, "Your coat will be dry by the morn, and you may be content with the cloak; it's not every one I should have made so welcome."

"Be it so," I replied, giving myself another hug in the cloak, by which I produced a new burst of laughter from the flaxen-pated young things, who, by the by, seemed to have conceived a sort of friendship for me, as being a creature not more respectable than themselves.

And now the critical moment was come, in which we were to see what the saucepans which hung in Dame Gwynne's chimney were able to produce. By this time the dame was hotter than her own fire, and was calling about her like a pilot in the midst of a storm: and first she poured forth a mess of porridge smelling strong of leeks and toasted cheese; next appeared a couple of boiled fowls; then a large portion of

bacon; and finally, a small piece of corned beef; which, together with the fried eggs and divers sorts of vegetables, presented so inviting a spectacle, that I had just risen from my seat, and was beginning to gather up the skirts of my cloak in preparation for the regale, when Mrs. Gwynne, observing my motions, bade me sit still, apprizing me that I must wait till the gentry in the parlour were served.

On hearing this, my blood mounted into my cheeks, and I muttered something about as good as they, and a well-lined purse, with sundry other expressions of the same tendency: but the dame, placing her muscular hand upon my shoulder, and forcing me back on my seat, replied, "Can't ye have patience? There will be plenty come out of the parlour. You shall be served by and by."

In the mean time, all the good cheer had vanished through the door-way as if by magic, and I was left to endure my hunger for another half-hour. However, I wanted not amusement in the interim; for, the parlour-door being left open, as the Hebe went

backwards and forwards conveying a large jack of ale, a bottle of wine, and other drinkables which were handed to her by her mistress, I could distinctly hear much which was passing among the august and mysterious inhabitants of that apartment. And first issued a shrill female voice from the *adyta,* speaking to the following effect: —"Brother—I say, brother Tim, dinner—dinner, brother—dinner's on table."

A sort of snore or groan ensued, with "Ay, sister, ay. What's it?"

"Dinner, brother. Get up, can't you? Your lady is waiting."

I then heard another female voice, in a rough, husky tone, but so indistinct that I could make nothing of what was said. Then followed a sort of creaking as from a crazy couch suddenly relieved of a heavy burden, and then a long yawn ending in a kind of groan, and finished off with an oath and an enquiry respecting what might be on the table.

The first female voice was then heard again, in somewhat offended accents, uttering the following oration:—"There now,

was ever the like of that? I say, brother Tim, did I not admonish you? Did I not give you my best counsels? But nothing will ever make a gentleman of you now. I give it up.—I give it up, in total despair."

The husky voice then reached my ears, and I caught the words, "Nay, dear sister, I am sure his regard ——" but at that moment the hostess crossed the kitchen, shut the parlour-door, and gave me a look significant of her determination that I should hear no more.

I now had nothing else to do but to enjoy my supper in anticipation, though I was not altogether without anxiety lest brother Tim should scarcely leave me sufficient to satisfy my cravings. I was, however, after a while, relieved by the re-appearance of part of a chicken and a good share of the beef and bacon, on which I contrived to make a very hearty meal.

It was nearly nine o'clock when I had supped; and I was looking about for my bed, when the parlour-door was suddenly opened, and two females appeared, followed by a large man. One of these women was

much taller than the other. She was hard-featured, pale, or rather sallow, and presenting angles in every direction. The other was a somewhat smaller person, but was so concealed by her companion, who stepped before her, that I did not see her face. She leaned on the arm of the lady of many angles, and they both together turned short up the stairs as soon as they entered the kitchen.

In the mean time the man came on towards the chimney, called for a pipe and the brandy-bottle, and stood for a while warming his back at the fire, and whistling "Nancy Dawson." He was a great porter-like figure, having his hair powdered and tied behind in a large club. He wore a blue coat, the rest of his dress being a bright buff. A large silk handkerchief was loosely tied round his neck, and a pair of brown-topped boots adorned his legs. He remained in the same attitude till Mrs. Gwynne had set a little table by him, with the brandy-bottle, hot water, sugar, and tobacco-pipes; and then he turned round, kicked the log on the fire, and sat down on a chair

which she set behind him. I then had an opportunity of observing his features, which were regular though on a large scale; and, indeed, he might have been accounted a handsome man had not his air and expression been singularly coarse, vulgar, and stupid.

Having settled himself in his chair and lighted his pipe, his eyes fell upon me, seated on my stool in the corner; and, being quite at a loss what to make of me in my blue cloak, he uttered several inelegant exclamations, and called to the hostess to know what sort of animal she had got there.

Mrs. Gwynne was ready with her answer. "It's only a little lad from over the mountain, Sir," she said: "but would you choose, Sir, that I should mix your grog?" at the same time putting two or three lumps of sugar into the tumbler.

"No molasses, no molasses," roared the hero of the buff waistcoat: "you know that I hate sweeteners." And then followed a dialogue between the hostess and her guest, which, not being particularly to my taste, I forbear to recount. After a while, how-

ever, he resumed his pipe, and his large blue eyes again fell upon me, and he returned to the charge, asking me if it might be the custom for lads to wear blue cloaks in my country; using certain expressions which excited my indignation in no small degree; and I was about to answer, and might have exhibited more choler than judgment, when suddenly my attention was attracted by the figure of the taller of the two ladies, whom I had previously seen coming out from the parlour. She was now descending the stairs, in the centre of which she stood still, looking even taller than before, in her present elevated situation, while her sallow face stood out in strong relief from her dark drapery and her black hood, or bonnet.

At the sound of her step, brother Tim turned himself half round in his chair, and we all waited in mute attention for what was to come next.

At length she spoke in a shrill querulous voice, and said, "Surely, Tim, it can't be you that's smoking, when you know my lady has such an abhorrence of tobacco!"

In reply to this, the amiable brother

sucked in a long fume from his pipe, by which unusual effort his cheeks were drawn in on either side till his face assumed the semblance of a pair of Dutch nutcrackers, and then, opening his mouth wide, he emitted the vapour in the direction of the exalted pedestal on which his sister stood.

The angry dame immediately descended, marched up to her brother, and attempted to seize the pipe from his hand, muttering something about her lady.

"Fair and softly," said the brother, holding her off with one hand, and keeping hold of the pipe with the other; "your lady is your lady, no question: but I take it, that, as far as I am concerned, things are altered now; and, therefore, you may tell your lady that I'll smoke when and where I please; accordingly, she had best make up her mind to the smell of tobacco as soon as she can."

"Brother," replied the indignant female, "had I foreseen" —— and she pursed up her mouth as if resolved not to add another word; and went out of the kitchen, leaving her brother to resume his pipe.

As soon as the sister was gone, the hostess made me a bed in the corner of the kitchen, where I laid myself down in my friendly cloak, and soon fell asleep; but, waking again at twelve o'clock, I still saw Mr. Timothy with his pipe and brandy-bottle.

In the morning I arose early, paid my hostess, and took my leave of the cabin and its mysterious visiters.

CHAPTER III.

THE OVERTHROW.

Dated in 1658.

It was a lovely evening in the month of June;—I had travelled from six o'clock in the morning on the top of a stage-coach, having on one side of me a respectable farmer, and on the other a tradesman from a neighbouring town;—the sun was approaching the western horizon;—just as, at the turn of a road, a fir-crowned peak or *tumulus* was admitted to our view. Rising from the centre of these dark trees was a tower of stone, on which the last rays of the setting sun were shedding their red glare. Behind this object, as we advanced, other hills and woods arose to view, giving a

promise that a lovely country would soon open before our eyes. On the road between us and the tower lay a wide common, or rather rabbit-warren, for the rabbits were so abundant that they crossed the road even at the very feet of the horses.

On enquiring respecting these various objects, the farmer informed me, that the tower was the warrener's lodge of Roxobel, that the woods and greener heights were in the park of Roxobel, and the bluer hills on the horizon were across the river, which formed the northern boundary of Roxobel.

"Roxobel?" I repeated, as if I would have asked; "and what is Roxobel?"

The tradesman immediately took me up sharply, saying, "Why, Sir, where can you have lived so long, not to have heard of Roxobel, and its beautiful hall and park? and the curious village and hermitage of Rockwood? and the great fall in the upper park, beyond the dingle? and the warrener's old tower? Why, Sir, Roxobel is the wonder of our country! Our people at Beckington always make it their holiday jaunt, to go to Roxobel!"

By this time, we were come in a line with the *tumulus*, and saw the warrener's tower above us to the right; and presently afterwards we passed through a turnpike, and entered upon a straight road bordered by a sort of paling somewhat curiously carved, behind which a thick and lofty wood raised its luxuriant foliage, appearing the more beautiful because of the picturesque inequalities of the banks on which it grew, which, in some places, being rough, stony, and precipitous, seemed almost to overhang our path, while in others they retired from it in long ravines and deep dingles; and again, in other places, an opening perspective afforded glimpses of cool pools and reedy swamps, with here and there a waterfall deep in the shade.

I was so filled with admiration of these lovely scenes, which unfolded themselves to me in rapid succession for the space of more than a quarter of a mile, that I heard little of what my companions were addressing to me during this time, till the farmer, shouting in my ears, supposing, perhaps, that I might be a little defective in the or-

gans of hearing, bade me have my eyes about me, adding, "for we shall see the Hall itself, Sir, in a minute;—and sure enough the clock-house now rises above the woods. And there, Sir, is the first pinnacle—and the second—and there, now they are all eight of them as distinct as my five fingers. And now you catch the south front. Is not it a noble mansion, Sir, fit for a king? It is a thousand pities that the ladies are so uncommon queer."

"What ladies, Sir?" I asked.

"The ladies of Roxobel," he answered, somewhat peevishly. "Who else should they be? The three Misses Helmsleys, the co-heiresses as was." And then the honest man plunged head and shoulders into the Helmsley history; saying, "But the estates did not come to the ladies by the father, neither, Sir. No; the old squire had no fortune of his own. The Roxobel property came to him by his lady; and he changed his name by act of parliament; but it is thought he paid dear enough for his high fortune; for Madam was a very cat in temper and disposition, and as covetous as the

grave: nevertheless, he enjoyed the estate for his life, that is, if there was any enjoyment in his life, and then it went to the three daughters, the co-heiresses, that is, Mrs. Winifred, Mrs. Grizzy, and Mrs. Judy. Each lady has her part; though I can't say how the lands are divided, but they all live together at the Hall, and keep great state. Not that they are so very old neither: but they have the very spirit of old maids, and a man might as well rob by the highway as touch a hare on the estate, though the hares are as rife at Roxobel as rats in a barn."

"Howsomever," remarked the tradesman, "the ladies keep a good house; for it is surprising what orders I had last Christmas. At any rate, Mrs. Nuttall, the housekeeper, is a very good friend of mine."

"So they say, Mr. Claypole," retorted the farmer, winking at me; "and I have heard it said that this good lady knows how to spice her own cakes as well as any housekeeper in the three kingdoms. Eh, Mr. Claypole, is it not said so?"

"I know nothing about it," returned the

grocer, with dignity. "I know only this, that Mrs. Nuttall is very kind to me; and we must not speak ill of the boat that carries us over the water."

What more the grocer might have added, I know not, for at this instant the hinder wheel of the coach gave way, and the next moment I was thrown to the ground with a stunning force, by which my arm was broken, and I was for a time deprived of my senses. It was through the kind care of Providence that I was not actually killed. Thus was I, a friendless individual from a distant land, literally, not figuratively, thrown upon the kindness of strangers.

No person on the coach was hurt excepting myself, but, as I afterwards heard, my fellow-passengers all alighted, and walked on to Beckington.

In the mean time, my worthy companion, Mr. Claypole, having procured assistance from the gardens of the Hall, which were close to where the accident had happened, lent a strong hand to carry me up to the village of Roxobel, where he had an intimate

friend, a surgeon and apothecary; taking care, also, that whatever luggage I might have with me in the coach should be brought after me: and all this was done with that celerity for which I afterwards found Mr. Claypole was remarkable.

In this extraordinary manner, within two hours after the hills of Roxobel had first presented themselves to my view, I was become a resident in the place, with the prospect of not very speedily quitting it. And surely there was something very remarkable in this dispensation: for it actually compelled me to settle myself in this charming retreat till I became seriously unwilling to leave it; and this at a period when I had long been in search of a resting-place, and still remained wholly undecided in my choice. Though the world was all before me, yet to no one point did my affections particularly tend. And yet how painfully had I felt the solitariness—the loneliness of my situation! It seems to me now, however, that a place of rest has been appointed me. Here would I remain till I take my last long journey, and till scenes more bright

than those which now surround me shall unfold themselves to my astonished gaze.—To proceed, however, with the details of my fortunate catastrophe.

I was carried, by Mr. Claypole, as I before remarked, to the house of the village surgeon, and placed on a sofa in the parlour; where, after I had been bled, and my dislocated arm had been set, I opened my eyes and recovered my senses, to find myself surrounded by persons who were wholly unknown to me, in a place of which I had not the smallest recollection. The state of the case, however, was soon explained to me; and then I had nothing to do, but to make the best acknowledgments in my power, for the kind attentions which I had experienced.

The hands in which I found myself, were those of Mr. Barnaby Semple, the Esculapius of Roxobel, to whose skill and attention I am indebted for the use of my right arm.

This Mr. Semple, it seems, had been lately settled in the village, under the patronage of Mrs. Judy Helmsley, whose pe-

culiar taste and pleasure it is, as I find, to suppose herself an invalid; and hence, it was natural for her to be anxious to have a medical man entirely at her command—and, at any rate, it was better for her to be under the direction of a skilful practitioner and a man of probity, than to be left to her own small discretion, to manage herself as her nerves and caprices dictated.

Mrs. Judy had been well advised in the choice of her medical friend; for Mr. Barnaby Semple, if I may judge by personal experience, is a man of sense, skill, and decision; and he has fallen into a good berth, to use a nautical phrase, for he receives a salary of a hundred a year from Mrs. Judy, with the use, free of rent, of a little neat, smart, new-built house, at the entrance of the village, prepared expressly for himself, with two bow windows in front; in one of which his phials and china jars make a very handsome appearance from the street, especially when the shop is duly lighted up, as it is sometimes seen to be on a dark night.

Mr. Barnaby Semple is still perhaps under thirty, and would be sufficiently well-looking, were not his hair inclined to red, and his mouth too wide; nevertheless, his teeth are as white as his own gallipots.

He is a great favourite I hear at the Hall, being, as Mrs. Judy asserts, a very genteel young man; and, as he is allowed to exercise his *savoir faire* in any part of the neighbourhood, at those hours when not required to attend at the Hall, he makes out a very handsome living.

I have somewhat broken the thread of my story, in order to record what I afterwards learned of the history of Mr. Semple, and shall now return to myself.

I could say much of the various friendly attentions which were shewn me as I lay on the couch in Mr. Semple's parlour, and of the questions which arose when it was declared that I could not hope to be able to continue my journey for some time. When I understood this difficulty, I declared my willingness to remain where I was, if a convenient lodging could be provided for me, to which I might be removed without

much trouble, and I further assured my new friends, that I was able and willing to pay for any convenience with which I might be supplied.

On this, there was a council called, the result of which was, that, within a few hours of my arrival at Roxobel, I was admitted into my present lodgings. I was conveyed on a mattress across the street, and carried up a wide old-fashioned staircase, and through an ample sitting-room into a large convenient bedchamber; where, with the assistance of Mr. Semple, I was laid in bed.

The ceremony of introduction to Mr. and Mrs. Strickland, my landlord and landlady, then ensued, and I found them to be a worthy couple, who were ready to shew me every possible kindness.

They are elderly persons, having no children; and Mr. Strickland is a sort of bailiff to the Misses Helmsley. These good people have a large house, and seem to be in easy circumstances; and having more rooms than they can occupy, are pleased, I think, by the opportunity of letting some of

them. I have engaged the sitting-room and my bedchamber. They are airy apartments, wainscoted with oak, and commanding a view of the gardens of the Hall.

As soon as I was laid in bed, Mr. Semple ordered that some tea should be administered to me, and consented, to Mrs. Strickland's entreaties, that a nurse should be sent for who understood the management of sick persons better than she professed to do.

Thus these worthy persons settled and arranged every thing for me, while I remained perfectly quiescent, feeling the assurance that I had fallen into good hands, and being confirmed in this opinion by seeing all my effects brought up, and stowed in the corner of my room; Mr. Barnaby Semple at the same time placing my purse in my hand, and informing me that he had taken it from my pocket when I was in a fainting condition, fearing that it might be mislaid. I, however, returned it to him again, and begged him to be my banker till I could assist myself.

I must continue a little time longer to

speak of myself; but I expect to have other subjects for my pen by and by.

The tea was given me as had been directed, and I soon fell asleep, but awoke about eleven, and found my bones excessively stiff, great pain in all my joints, and a sort of feverishness about me, which continued to increase all night, and became so violent in the morning, that from that time, for several days, I knew nothing that passed; though I remember receiving many kind offices—hearing many condolences and lamentations—and seeing many sympathizing faces around me. There is nothing which endears one human being to another, like the attentions paid and received in sickness; and according to this rule, it happened, that my tender hostess and nurse, (for Mrs. Goodwill, the village nurse had been sent for,) had so won upon me while I lay half insensible, that a sort of affection was established between us even before I knew their names, or half of what I owed to them.

My fever hung upon me nine days, and my life was in peril. But on the tenth

morning, after a very long and deep sleep, I opened my eyes, and found myself still weak, indeed, but perfectly restored to my senses. I looked round me. I was lying on a comfortable bed. All about me was delicately neat; and not a spot was to be seen on the well-polished floor. The window was open, through which I could observe a green bank, closely shorn, and decorated with many small trees and beautiful flowering shrubs, in the centre of which was a stone statue standing on an elevated pedestal. Within my room, at the foot of my bed, sat an elderly woman, simply dressed, and very busy with some needlework. She was a person of a peculiarly sweet and lovely countenance, which expressed more intelligence than could have been expected in her humble situation of a village nurse. As I before said, she was engaged with her needlework when I first became sensible of my situation, but turned to observe me soon afterwards.

That was a mild and sweet look which I then received from the stranger. I felt its kindness, though I did not speak.

She arose, and came to the head of my bed.

"You are better, Sir," she said. "You have enjoyed a long sweet sleep. God is very good. I hope you may live to thank and bless him. You have been very ill. We feared we should have lost you: but the Almighty has restored you."

"Kind, excellent people!" I said; "and could a poor little stranger interest you so much? Were you really anxious for my recovery?"

"We were," she answered, with simplicity, while the tear stood in her eye: "but we will not talk of these things now. You shall have some breakfast. You are very weak. Be assured you are with friends—quite safe with friends;" and she left me in order to fetch my breakfast.

This was nurse Goodwill. I shall have more to say of this excellent woman hereafter. Her voice was very sweet to me: when I first heard it I was reminded of my mother. Ah! why should I cling so to the memory of my mother? And the name of sister; why should these recollections

be so very dear to me? But I am debarred from forming new connexions of a nature as intimate as those of my childhood. Those places in the heart of man which are first devoted to a mother and a sister may indeed be again filled up, yea, more than filled up, by the wife and daughter. But these are connexions I can never know. Yet my heart shall not be a wilderness, if I can help it. It cannot be. I must have something to love; and I have found many things to love at Roxobel.

With my breakfast of tea and a slender piece of toasted bread, came my worthy hostess to congratulate me on my amendment. Mrs. Strickland had not that superior air which had so much surprised me in the nurse; but she was honest and hearty, and rejoiced over my bed as an affectionate mother would rejoice over the bed of a son snatched from the jaws of death. She called me a dear gentleman, a dear little gentleman, and thanked God for my recovery; but her voice was rather loud, and I was glad to be left with Mrs. Goodwill.

My convalescence was long, and the

fracture of my arm rendered me exceedingly helpless: so that for more than a month Mrs. Goodwill remained in the house. During this time I determined, that if I could still be entertained at Mrs. Strickland's, I would continue a while at Roxobel; and accordingly, when I got a little better, I commenced preparations, directing Mrs. Goodwill to unpack my boxes, and arrange their contents, which she accomplished entirely to my satisfaction. This little task was a sort of amusement to me, as I lay on my sofa in my sitting-room, during several weeks in which I was unable to help myself.

It was summer time, as I before said, and my couch was placed in a large oriel window, which projects beyond the wall of the house and overhangs the garden of the Hall; my landlord's dwelling being situate just opposite Mr. Barnaby Semple's new tenement, the street running between them, while one front of the house opens upon the Hall gardens, giving to the upper rooms a commanding prospect of the lawn, the embowered walks, the triangular and heart-

shaped parterres, the grotesque statues, the terraces, and the many and various quaint devices, with which these old-fashioned premises are adorned. Over these repositories of nature and art, the tower of the village church is visible, with a part of the roof of the schoolhouse, and a glimpse of the park on the left: a calm, fragrant, and refreshing scene, most attractively inviting to one who, like me, has long desired a retired and peaceful habitation among simple people, where reciprocal acts of kindness may endear us to each other until the end of life.

I had already begun to fancy that Roxobel was the kind of place which would suit me; and now, this charming prospect from the window of my sitting-room finally determined me to sojourn here for some months.

With this view I encouraged Mrs. Goodwill to talk to me, and give me some notion of the sort of people who composed the society of the place. And, as she sat opposite my couch, putting my linen in order, I had address enough to engage her

in this service without making her aware of my object, for which purpose no inconsiderable degree of management was necessary, as I had clearly discovered that she was very superior to persons in general in her rank in life.

She soon gave me all the information which I desired, and presently proceeded to unravel the complicated clue of the parish history, which she handled with so much skill, that, before I left my room, I was in possession of all the remarkable characters within the boundaries of Roxobel, and was prepared to love some, to honour others, and to feel an interest in all.

I must acknowledge, however, that although the benevolent Mrs. Goodwill never mingled any bitterness in her tales, there was now and then a little archness blended with her descriptions of character, which was not altogether uncongenial with my taste. Her own was the first tale which she unfolded. She accounted for her superior manners and intelligence, by informing me that she was the daughter of a former Rector of Roxobel, and the widow of a person who

had once known better days, but had died insolvent:—that she was then residing in a hamlet called Rockwood, or the Rock Hamlet, and had only one surviving daughter, who had been married twice; having one daughter living by her former husband, though none of three or four whom she had by the second now survived. She did not mention her daughter's second marriage with any satisfaction; but spoke with delight of her little granddaughter, then about nine years of age, expatiating somewhat largely on her extraordinary loveliness. I made allowances, at the time, for parental partiality; but, when I saw Ellen some days afterwards, I found that these allowances were quite unnecessary.

Her own little tale being told, the excellent woman proceeded to give me a sort of topographical and biographical history of the parish; which I shall endeavour to set down, as nearly as possible, in her own words.

"Roxobel," said Mrs. Goodwill, "is, as my father used to remark, a sort of Oäsis

—a little fertile spot, existing in the perfection of its own loveliness, in the midst of ordinary scenes—a little world within itself, which has scarcely its equal in this island.

"The parish is nearly foursquare, each side facing one of the cardinal points. It is bounded on the south, by that long range of woods, underneath which extends the turnpike road for a considerable distance, at the end of which, the high road suddenly taking a turn, the boundary is continued in the same line, for two miles or more, through one of the deepest, dirtiest lanes in all the neighbourhood—though, like many other dirty lanes, it intersects a country in which Nature shews herself in her most lovely and fantastic garb. To the north, the parish of Roxobel is bounded by the river T——, a wild mountain stream, so full of falls, that no boat can venture further on it, than from wear to wear, or from one milldam to another. The country on the other side of this river rises boldly from the very banks, and being covered with thick woods, presents

many very fair points of view from the park and higher grounds of Roxobel. To the east, the parish is bounded by a wide sandy common, in the midst of which, is seen the warrener's tower; of which more hereafter. To the west, the country is broken into hills and dales, and covered with thick coppices. In that direction, too, is what we call the hamlet of the Rock, where I have a pretty cottage, in which I shall be most happy to see you, my good Sir, when you are able to walk. And thus I have described the boundaries of our lovely Roxobel. And now, Sir, please to allow me to conduct you to the Hall, which, though close at hand, you can scarcely yet have seen. But please, Sir, just to raise yourself, and, above those higher shrubs, you will see the clock-house with its gilt vane; which, by the by, reminds me of poor Mrs. Judy Helmsley—for Mr. Barnaby Semple assures me that whenever the weathercock turns its head to the east, he is sure to have a summons extraordinary to the Hall; Mrs. Judy always having a fit of the nerves when the

wind is in the east; insomuch so that, last winter, when the east wind blew so long, the old butler made one of the footmen climb to the cupola, and tie the vane in another direction; in consequence of which, Mrs. Judy got suddenly better, although the wind had not shifted a single point."

I am not fond of interrupting people in the midst of a story; however, I could not help remarking in this place, that I suspected there were some roguish people at Roxobel, as well as in other places.

"O! no doubt, Sir," said Mrs. Goodwill, and went on with her story. "Well, Sir, the Hall is a handsome edifice, built about the time of William of Orange, and in the Dutch style. Some say it is heavy and tasteless:—and so, perhaps, it may be, but I have been so long accustomed to see it as it is, that I would not have it altered on any account. It is built precisely in the shape of the letter H, and presents three handsome fronts; the fourth, which is towards the village, being occupied by the offices. Of the three principal fronts, one

nearly faces the country before us, and commands a fine view of the park; the second looks over the woods, to the warrener's tower, and the wide campaign beyond; and the south front faces the prospect down towards the high road; though the road is not visible from it, by reason of the irregularity of the ground, and the multitude of trees with which it is covered. This view, however, is much enlivened by the spring which runs from the higher parts of the park, to the east of the mansion, forming a kind of serpentine pool or lake, between that and the road.

"There are eight little towers, or cupolas, on the eight corners of the roof; which, in my opinion, have a handsome appearance: though some persons much disapprove of them, as well as of the stone frames of the windows, which are all casement, and some of them enriched with painted glass. But, I think, these things are all so much of a piece with the old-fashioned gardens which surround the house, that I would not have a single alteration made. Moreover, it is a noble house within, and

has a magnificent hall, a superb staircase, long and lofty galleries, an exceedingly fine library full of old books, and various parlours, dining-rooms, and withdrawing-rooms, set off with old pictures, statues, curious clocks and watches, rich china, gilt furniture, and all sorts of curiosities, of which the ladies are particularly careful. And, indeed, they have little else to do, than to take care that things are kept in their places. But, we will hope, my good Sir, that you will soon be able to see these things yourself; and if you could obtain permission to read in the library, where a fire is always kept for the good of the books, I have no doubt that you would find there many valuable authors. To read in the library was a privilege possessed by my dear father, and which is now enjoyed by our present rector; and I have no doubt, that this favour might be easily procured for you by Mr. Barnaby Semple, who is a great man at the Hall."

I could have got up and shaken the hand of Mrs. Goodwill at this suggestion, which was infinitely agreeable to me; but I re-

frained from interrupting her, as she seemed to be proceeding from a description of the great mansion itself to an account of its inhabitants.

"I know little of the history of the family," continued Mrs. Goodwill, "previously to the time in which my father entered upon his living; at which period, a Miss Tabitha Helmsley was the sole possessor of this noble estate.

"This lady, it is said, had neither the best conditioned, nor the most agreeable of persons; and she was withal so whimsical that she rejected all the splendid offers which were tendered her in her youth, in order to marry a rough country squire, who had not a single idea beyond a stable, a dog-kennel, or a fox-earth.

"The fruits of this ill-assorted match, (for it proved to be quite as uncomfortable as might have been expected,) were the three present ladies of the Hall;—namely, Mrs. Winifred, Mrs. Griselda, and Mrs. Judy:—the eldest of whom must now be more than fifty, and the youngest probably six years less.

"Mrs. Tabitha Helmsley, whose surname had been adopted by her husband, died when her eldest daughter was about twenty-five years of age; soon after which, Mr. Helmsley married again, selecting for his second wife a young lady, who, I may venture to say, was at least very lovely in person. By this marriage he had one daughter only—poor Miss Emily Helmsley; a sweet young creature, indeed, but one who drew a sorrowful lot;—for, losing her mother when she was about fifteen, she had much to endure from her elder sisters; and often, poor thing, used to come, with the tear in her eye, when my poor husband was living, to tell those sorrows to me, which she dared not reveal to another. In the mean time, the three Misses Helmsley, of the first family, had their several suitors; and, it was currently reported, from time to time, that one or another was preparing to enter into the holy state of wedlock. All these promising appearances, however, came to nothing. Perhaps the lovers let it appear that their views were directed with less ardency to-

wards the ladies, than towards the lands, by which means they might possibly disgust those whom it was their object to please: or it might be conjectured, on the other hand, that the ladies themselves were not altogether destitute of whim and caprice. However, one thing is certain: time went on; and the coheiresses remained single.

"At length, Mr. Helmsley sent for a cousin of his first lady, Mr. Edmund Lovel, who, after his daughters, was the next heir to the estates; and, as it is reported, the old gentleman gave this young man to understand, that he would not be unfavourably received as a son-in-law; little suspecting, however, towards which member of his family his choice would be directed.

"Edmund Lovel was perhaps as fine a youth, both in intellect and person, as ever was seen; and he no sooner appeared at the Hall, than it became apparent that he might choose as he pleased among the lands and ladies of Roxobel.

"Report, which is always busy, first gave him to Mrs. Winifred, who, by her

mother's will, was to inherit the Hall and park, and one-third of the lands; and then, to Mrs. Grizzy, who was also to have a third; and next, to Mrs. Judy—for the youth amused himself with one and another of these ladies, as young men who are not strictly honourable are too apt to do; although, in some way or other, they generally have reason to rue the fruits of such follies. But, in the midst of all this vanity, the old gentleman was suddenly cut off in an apoplectic fit, and Mr. Lovel, after following his uncle to the grave, absented himself till the year of mourning had expired; after which he returned, and, to the amazement of all the country, solicited and obtained the hand of the lovely Miss Emily, whom he preferred, with a fortune of eight thousand pounds, bequeathed by her father, to any one of her elder sisters, who were each worth more than six times eight.

"Roxobel was no comfortable place for Mr. and Mrs. Lovel after this. They therefore left it immediately: and the three elder ladies seemed to feel the slight which

had been put upon them more than could have been expected. This, however, might be only report; for they left us about that time, and were absent a few years travelling about, and when they returned, we thought them considerably altered.

"In the mean time, Mr. and Mrs. Lovel, as I was told, enjoyed much happiness, and were blessed in the birth of two children—Master Eugenius and Miss Lucy; but soon after the birth of the little lady, Mr. Lovel died suddenly, and his afflicted lady returned, as she too truly said, to die at Roxobel.

"Being no longer an object of rivalry to her sisters," continued Mrs. Goodwill, "she was most kindly received at the Hall, and I was sent for to attend her, and to take charge of the infants; an under-nurse being also provided.

"Alas! poor Miss Emily, or rather I should say poor Mrs. Lovel, how changed she was when I first saw her on her return to the Hall!—so thin, so pale; the blue veins on her fair temples shewed as plain as if they had been traced with a pencil; and there

was all the bereaved widow in the expression of her fine eyes. Poor Miss Emily! Her figure is now before me, such as it was in the very pride of her beauty; for she was a lovely creature. I think I see that sweet and saucy expression of her under lip which she assumed when vexed or grieved, and the April smile which so speedily followed. It pained me more than I can express to see her thus changed. I nursed her long and carefully; but my care was of no avail. The hand of death was upon her: she pined and pined, and became a mere skeleton. Yet, I have the happiness of saying, that, in proportion as her mortal part wasted away, her soul seemed more and more prepared for a blessed change. When I first went to her, indeed, I felt myself capable of giving her some instruction on the doctrines of our salvation; but the scholar, by the divine blessing, so speedily outran the teacher, that, before her departure, it was her office to teach, and mine to learn.

"Her death was a blessed one, Sir—a very blessed one. I shall never, never forget it.

We laid her in the family vault at the feet of her father and mother, and by the side of her husband, whose remains had been brought to Roxobel by his own especial desire: Mr. Lovel having been, as I before said, cousin to the first Mrs. Helmsley, and, after her daughters, next heir, in point of law, to the estates.

"Thus Mrs. Lovel died. It is nine years last Candlemas-day, since her interment. Master Eugenius and Miss Lucy were both brought to the church on the occasion; Master Eugenius being then five years old, and Miss Lucy only one. They were dressed in black, and the poor little boy was more affected than could have been thought, and quite shrieked when the coffin was lowered into the vault: but the little lady laughed and crowed in my arms, and tried to reach the silver ornaments on the pall, which affected many of us very much; and particularly our clergyman's lady, whose little daughter Sophia was just about Miss Lucy's age.

"After the funeral, I brought the poor babes back to the Hall, and was taking

them up to their nursery, when Mrs. Penelope Nuttall, that is, Mrs. Winifred Helmsley's confidential servant, directed me to bring the children to her lady, who was sitting with her sisters in the brown parlour, which is the room the family generally occupy, all the sisters, as well as the whole family, being in deep mourning.

"I obeyed the command, with much surprise; and, as soon as I entered the room, was desired to bring the children close up to the ladies. My surprise arose from this circumstance, that the ladies had never previously taken any notice of the children; from which it had been inferred, that they would send them to their father's friends immediately after the funeral. However, on this occasion they received them most kindly, though not cordially: for the ladies of the Hall seldom exhibit much cordiality of manner, though they are not deficient in kindness to their friends and dependants. Mrs. Winifred shook hands with the little gentleman, and bade him be a good boy, and not cry, for he should stay at the Hall, and have a horse to ride

upon when he was big enough; which very words were repeated, first by Mrs. Grizzy, and then by Mrs. Judy, so that they were well impressed upon my mind. And then the ladies condescended to kiss the baby, as I held her to them, though sorely against the will of the little infant; for she turned her face quite away from them. And Mrs. Winifred then said, 'Lucy, I think I shall love *you*;' laying a stress on the word *you*, which I thought rather strange, as it seemed almost as much as to say, 'I shall prefer you before your brother,' which was what I could not understand. I was then asked if I would choose to stay and take care of the children, Mrs. Winifred propounding the question somewhat solemnly, and the two others repeating it after her in the very same words. Being thus entreated, I consented to stay a month or two; but as soon as Miss Lucy had cut all her teeth, I was obliged to give up my charge; delivering it, however, to one who did justice by the children, though she has not lived to see them reared.

"Master Eugenius is now fourteen," proceeded Mrs. Goodwill, "and is instructed by our rector, Dr. Beauchamp, in company with the doctor's own son Theodore. Dr. Beauchamp's pupils are both charming boys. Miss Lucy is just ten, and still remains with her maid at the Hall; and surely, if I am not very partial, there is not a lovelier creature in the world.

"She has been at Mrs. Strickland's many times since your arrival, Sir, to ask after you, and I hope to have the pleasure of bringing her up to you when next she comes. She is a delicate creature, fair as a lily, has a thousand dimples about her pretty mouth, and has so little pride that she exhibits but one set of courtesies in all companies. I only hope that she may not get spoiled when she knows her own consequence.

"And now, Sir," continued Mrs. Goodwill, "I think I have made you pretty well acquainted with the history of the family at the Hall.

"Our ladies have a great many good qualities, notwithstanding their singulari-

ties. They are kind landladies, indulgent mistresses; very compassionate towards the poor, and still more tender of their dogs and horses, their game and poultry. They will not suffer a tree to be cut down, nor even the form of a gate or a stile to be altered, throughout their domains. They hate new fashions, or innovations as they call them; they observe all old customs, and are as rigorous as papists or heathens in the observance of days and festivals, forms and ceremonies. The two younger sisters are said never to have an opinion of their own, but to be entirely governed by Mrs. Winifred, in whom all the wit of the family is centered; and if Mrs. Winifred were governed by her own good sense, and were not in her turn subjected in a most unaccountable manner to the dominion of Mrs. Nuttall, her own maid and housekeeper, many things perhaps would be better done than they now are. But the under-servants complain a great deal of this Mrs. Nuttall, who makes them all feel successively what slavery it is to be the servant of servants;

and this tyranny on the part of the housekeeper, led to a great rejoicing at Roxobel some months ago, on occasion of the said Mrs. Nuttall being laid up with the confluent small-pox. These exultations, however, proved premature: for Mr. Barnaby Semple brought her through the disease, and restored her to her old station at the Hall, with diminished beauty indeed, but unabated vigour, for which exploit he obtained more favour from Mrs. Winifred than popularity among the villagers."

I could not help smiling in this part of Mrs. Goodwill's narrative, and asked her if she was one of those who owed Mr. Barnaby Semple a grudge for the skill he had exercised in favour of Mrs. Nuttall.

She smiled again, as she replied, "No, dear Sir, not I, indeed;—I wish Mrs. Nuttall no ill whatever. To use an old phrase, I believe her bark is worse than her bite; and, as far as I am myself concerned, I have neither the one nor the other to complain of."

Our conversation was interrupted in this place by a gentle rap at the door; and

Mrs. Strickland presented herself, requesting permission to introduce to me Miss Lucy Lovel, a favour which I very readily conceded.

CHAPTER IV.

CONTAINING MUCH WHICH IT IS REQUISITE TO KNOW.

WELL might Mrs. Goodwill say, she trusted that Lucy Lovel would never be spoiled. I add, may she never be changed. Who can imagine a beauty superadded to a snowdrop, to a violet, or to the bud of a moss rose? Was ever creature more fair, more fresh, more simple, more warm-hearted, more truly lovely, than Lucy Lovel? Lovely, I say; for the words lovely, Lucy, and Lovel, are now united for ever in my mind. Not merely is she brilliantly fair and superbly fresh, far surpassing what could be expected at ten years of age, but, above all, she still remains delightfully incapable of receiving worldly ideas.—Mrs. Goodwill truly affirmed, that she has but

one set of courtesies for all ranks and degrees; and these she bestows without partiality or restraint; not that she connects with them the notion of politeness, but that she seems to consider them as convenient expressions of her pure good will. Every man, I am told, however humble be his station, is honoured by her with the title of Sir; and every woman with that of Ma'am. Her desire of assisting every one prompts her to offer a helping hand on all occasions: And the incompatibleness of her delicate hands, with the tasks she would assign to them, often excites the smile of the beholder, and not unfrequently draws forth the voice of praise, and even of flattery:—but, as Mrs. Goodwill informs me, Lucy is so organized, that flattery no further affects her, than by exciting her gratitude towards the flatterer; and hence, it appears, she has not yet been spoiled by it.

But this sweet creature is only ten years old;—what will she be at twelve?—what at eighteen? Such a being at eighteen,—so fresh, so fair, so simple, so brilliantly

lovely, so universally benevolent,—would be the most captivating, the most delightful, the most exquisite, of the human race. Were I her father, I would say, "How shall we preserve this freshness?" And I should answer, "By avoiding worldly conversation in her presence; by endeavouring to inspire her with the purest principles of piety; and, above all, by avoiding that most insidious of pollutions, the smile at sinful communications, which too often betrays a lurking love of corruption even in the hearts of those who aim at excellence."

Mrs. Strickland came forward, with the little lady in her hand; the worthy young woman who is her maid bringing up the rear.

"Sir," said my landlady, "I bring Miss Lucy to see you. She has called often since your illness; and to her you owe the strawberries and currants which refreshed you so much during your fever."

I raised myself to pay my compliments to the little lady, who came up close to my couch, made a low courtesy, and said, with grave simplicity, "I am Lucy Lovel, Sir,

and I am come to ask you how you do." And with that she presented me with a superb nosegay arranged by her own hands.

The fair creature, as she stood before me, all glowing with youth and affection, gave me the idea of an angel; and I accordingly answered her with profound respect.

"Sir," she enquired, "are you better? is your arm well? was it quite broken in two, Sir? I hope you will be able to use it again." And she looked upon the bandaged arm with a kind of shuddering sympathy, adding, "Sir, does it hurt you now?"

I then assured her that it was quite easy, and likely soon to be well, on which her countenance brightened, and she said, "You will not go away, Sir, when you are well, I hope. Will you stay here, and live with Mrs. Strickland?" And then, as if to fix my resolutions, she added, "I come here very often, Sir, and when you are well, I will take you to see my aunts."

"And you will ask them to let Mr. Airley

read in the library whenever he pleases, Miss Lucy, will you not?" said Mrs. Goodwill.

"Would you like to read in the library, Sir?" asked the little lady, drawing nearer to me, and laying her hand in mine; "then I will get leave for you. But, Sir,"—and then she hesitated a little, and speaking lower, said, "do you think that you can reach the books from the highest shelves?—and all the picture books are at the top!"

Mrs. Goodwill and Mrs. Strickland were, I perceived, a little afraid of the effect of this remark; but there was no necessity for fear. I readily comprehended the young lady's artless feelings, and answered her with the same simplicity, saying, "If there are any steps in the library, I can get upon them, Miss Lucy, and so get the books down."

"When you are able to come out, Sir," she rejoined, "I will shew you a great many things;"—and she began to enumerate her playthings and little possessions, under the impression, no doubt, that I was a child like herself, and that I would feel

interested in the same objects; concluding with a promise that she would come and see me again very soon.

I assured her, on my part, that the oftener she visited me, the better I should be pleased; so forthwith a friendship was established between us, which I trust, will never be interrupted; the first fruits of which attachment was another visit, that very evening, from Miss Lucy, bringing a pheasant from her aunts, with their compliments and a polite assurance that I was welcome to visit the library every day, at any hour I chose, and to stay as long as I thought proper.

In the mean time, my mind seemed to be drawn more and more towards a residence in lovely Roxobel; agreeably to which, I that very evening made my final arrangements with Mr. and Mrs. Strickland, who were by this time as anxious to retain me as I was to remain with them. I likewise procured Mrs. Goodwill to write to my agent in town to send me down my books, my organ, my materials for drawing, a box of Bibles, and some such little

articles as seemed likely to be useful to me in propitiating the regard of the young or the old, whom I might choose to set down on my list of friends at Roxobel.

Mrs. Goodwill expressed some surprise at the extent of my orders; yet, perhaps, not quite so much as she would have discovered, had I not already defrayed all my debts up to that period, in a manner which had given general satisfaction.

I felt somewhat fatigued by the exertions of that day, but slept sweetly,—was awakened by the carols of the birds, and at breakfast was regaled with a little basket of strawberries, which had been gathered and presented by the fairy hands of the benevolent and lovely little Lucy.

When laid on my couch in my oriel, I called on Mrs. Goodwill to go on with her history, indicating the place in which she should re-commence by saying, that I had discovered across the garden, directly in the east, and a little on one side of the tower of the church which arose among the trees just beyond the boundaries of the Hall gardens, the chimneys

and part of the gable-end, of an old edifice.

"Yes," said she, "that is the schoolhouse. It was founded and endowed many years since by one of the Helmsleys. It is a very old building, of timber, and lath and plaster, and faces the churchyard. It is divided into two tenements; the one appropriated to the mistress, and the other to the master. Each house has its kitchen and its school-room, with bed-rooms on the upper story, and a little garden behind. The endowment is but a moderate maintenance for a family; but the master augments his income by means of private pupils whom he teaches to write and cipher, and the mistress contrives to increase hers by teaching some of the higher class of children, the poor being all free.

"Our present master, Mr. Pen Map," continued Mrs. Goodwill, "is quite a singular character, and little suited to his situation. Being in favour at the Hall, he formerly instructed at odd hours Master Taffy Nuttall, the housekeeper's nephew, who is too great a man to attend the school. I do

not, however, mean to say, that Mr. Pen Map has not some talents; for he writes a good hand, has a clear head for accounts, and for measuring lands and setting sun-dials: but his poor mind is inflated with self-conceit, which makes him at once forward and ridiculous, and leads him to advance quite beyond his depth. He writes epitaphs and epithalamiums; uses hard words out of their places; intrudes his company when not wanted; is 'hail, fellow, well met,' with his betters; is overcome with the smallest cup of strong liquor, which may possibly be imputed to his extreme loquacity, and the natural lightness of his brain; and is, above all, excessively hot and testy: by all which weaknesses, without being a bad man, he incurs the contempt of his young people, and they are, in consequence, little benefited by his instructions. He is a tall, slender, sallow, middle-aged person; but has a peculiar gait, and an exceedingly pompous gravity of countenance."

"Add no more, Mrs. Goodwill!" I exclaimed: "you have said enough; I have

Mr. Pen Map before me to the life. I shall know him, when I meet him, without another trait.—And now may I request that you will proceed to the schoolmistress."

"Mrs. Tristram," subjoined Mrs. Goodwill, "is one of the ornaments of Roxobel. She is one who has known many, many sorrows; a bereaved mother; a widow; sunk in fortune; weak in body; elegant in mind; humble, laborious, gentle, and even cheerful; living by faith, and not by sight; and wholly devoted to the good of her young people. She supports on her scanty income an aged and childish mother, to whose comfort she administers to the utmost of her power, by the sacrifice of all her ease.

"Mrs. Tristram, Sir," added the excellent speaker, "is worthy of your regard, and of your benevolence; and I shall rejoice as much in any good done to her, as in any favour you could bestow on me. She has called twice to enquire after you, Sir."

"Then, Mrs. Goodwill, when I am able to walk, our first visit shall be to Miss Lucy," I replied; "and our second to Mrs.

Tristram;—and when my box of varieties comes, you shall choose a present for Mrs. Tristram. And now, where shall we go next?"

"Why, Sir," replied Mrs. Goodwill, "where should we go, but to the dwelling which stands nearest to the schoolhouse? You have but to cross the churchyard, go out at the gate towards the north, traverse about half a quarter of a mile of the park, and enter in at the rector's green gate. And yet, before you enter, I could wish you to pause a while, in order that I may describe the situation. The parsonage house is built of white stone from the quarry in the park. Its front presents six windows, two of which, on the ground-floor are Venetian. Opposite the hall-door, which is situated in the furthest side from this place, is an extensive lawn; and at the back of the dwelling is a shrubbery, beautifully laid out. Behind it, the park rises abruptly with its groves, and deep shades, and haunts for deer, and water-falls, and fairy knolls and dingles. But you must see these places, Sir, before

you can imagine them. The parsonage is indeed a sweet spot, and those who inhabit it are not less lovely than their habitation; though, I am sorry to say, about seven years since, precisely two years subsequent to the funeral of poor Mrs. Lovel, we had a very heavy loss in the first wife of our rector, who was one of the excellent of the earth. The family now consists of Dr. Beauchamp himself, his second wife,—for he was one who could not live alone,—and his two children by his former wife, Theodore and Sophia, the latter of whom is about the age of Miss Lucy, and you must see her, Sir, to form a clear idea of her, for in her manners she is just about such another sweet little creature as the young lady at the Hall, though she is not so free with strangers: hence her father often compares her to the fawns in the park, which may be seen frisking at a distance, but are always frightened when approached.

Master Eugenius and Master Theodore are always together, and remind me of the portraits of Prince Rupert and Prince Mau-

rice in the gallery at the Hall; though the little boys are not like each other, for Master Eugenius resembles his father, whose figure was accounted one of the most elegant that ever was seen, but Master Theodore is a little sturdy rogue, with eyes as black as sloes, and though warmhearted, will, if I mistake not, give his parents some heartaches before he sows his wild oats; and I am the more inclined to think so, because his father, Dr. Beauchamp, seldom can see any body's faults, much less those of his children and friends; although, in the abstract, he is fully convinced of the depravity of human nature, and by no means blinded to the perception of his own defects. But the doctor has such an overflowing benevolence, such an exuberance of Christian charity, that he seems quite unable to exercise that strictness of discipline, which is so necessary in the father of a family, and the minister of a parish. And then, Sir, he is a poet, a man of no common talents; and his imagination dresses every thing in rose colour:—so that he lives, as it were, in a world of his own.

"Dr. Beauchamp's mode of looking at the bright side," continued Mrs. Goodwill, "and the method pursued by Mrs. Nuttall and some others, of ruminating on the dismal, remind me of the old fable of the spectacles, which I suppose is well known to you, my good Sir."

I however confessed my ignorance, and begged Mrs. Goodwill would favour me by repeating the fable, on which she related the tale as follows.

"Jupiter one day enjoying himself over a bowl of nectar, and in a merry humour, determined to make mankind a present. Momus was appointed to convey it to them, who, mounted on a rapid car, was presently on earth. 'Come hither,' said he, 'ye happy mortals! Great Jupiter has opened, for your benefit, his all gracious hands. 'Tis true, he made you somewhat short-sighted; but to remedy that inconvenience, behold how he has favoured you!'—So saying, he unloosed his portmanteau; an infinite number of spectacles tumbled out; and mankind picked them up with great eagerness. There was enough for all; every man

had his pair. But it was found, that these spectacles did not represent objects to every individual alike: for one pair was purple, another blue; one was white, and another black; some of the glasses were red, some green, and some yellow; some magnified, some diminished; some were long-sighted, some were short-sighted; and some were cracked. In short, they presented colours of every tint, and lenses of every variety. However, notwithstanding this diversity, every man was charmed with his own, as believing them the best, and it was never known that any man would submit to use his neighbour's glasses."

"Upon my word, Mrs. Goodwill," I exclaimed, "you have some amusing ideas. I shall not easily forget your fable of the spectacles. And so you would pretend, that all our friends at Roxobel are provided with these gifts of Jupiter; and that the worthy rector's glasses are *du coleur de rose*, Mrs. Nuttall's black, and Mr. Pen Map's perhaps a little cracked!—Pray, my good lady, have you discovered the colour of my glasses?"

"There is, I think, a little tint of the pink

in yours, my good Sir,—the glow of the morning at least," she replied with promptness; "but God bless you, and enable you to keep a little of the gayer tint until a brighter and fairer vision shall rise before you to gild the evening of your days."

This was a pretty and affecting turn to give to the conversation, and she followed it up with the ensuing remark.

"Setting Jupiter and Momus, with their spectacles, aside, I must add, that I should not do Dr. Beauchamp justice, if I did not say, that I believe his bright and happy views proceed not wholly from his natural temperament, but, in a great measure, from his very warm and beautiful conceptions of the divine mercy, as displayed in the character of the Redeemer. Sometimes, indeed, I think, that he applies the comforts of religion too hastily; nevertheless he has had many seals to the faithfulness of his ministry; and many, I believe, have been laid in yonder churchyard, who are now attesting thereunto, 'high in salvation and the climes of bliss.'—Yet still, I must confess, that he is sometimes over-indulgent;

but if, when you know him, you don't love him, and say he is one of the sweetest spirits that you ever met with, I am much mistaken both in him and in you."

"You will not be mistaken, Mrs. Goodwill," I replied. "But one thing puzzles me. —You say, you live in a cottage, among poor people. Granting that you have had a good education, how happens it that you have been able to preserve that refinement of mind which forms the only real distinction, in my opinion, between the different classes of human beings? You see that I am plain with you: you will not be offended!"

She coloured slightly, sighed, and then replied, "I cannot be offended, Sir, for there is no rudeness implied; far from it. I am fully aware that low society naturally tends to degrade the mind, and this I have found too in the case of my own daughter, who, though a good woman, a very good woman, is not a lady; but, for my own part, since my depression in society, I have seen much good company in my capacity as nurse, and I have always loved

and cultivated a taste for reading. Moreover, Dr. Beauchamp, and all the family at the parsonage, treat me as an equal; so that I have the advantage of their good company."

"An equal!" I repeated; "and so you are."

"A worldly family would not think so, Sir," was her answer.

"True," I replied; "there are many whose spectacles do not represent these things accurately."

"But, Sir," she proceeded, "before we leave the parsonage, and proceed in our perambulation, I must speak of the present Mrs. Beauchamp. She is a distant relation of the family—a middle-aged woman—comely in her person, though not particularly genteel; and she won the doctor's heart by her extreme kindness to his first wife during her long illness, and her attention to his infant children after their mother's death. She is a kind, good, charitable, excellent creature, but too indulgent, I fear, to Master Theodore. As to Miss Sophia, she is such a gentle lamb, that she would not be easily spoiled."

Here we were interrupted by the appearance of Miss Lucy's pheasant, smoking in the dish.

When the dinner apparatus was removed, and Mrs. Goodwill was again stationed by me with her needle, she resumed her discourse. "I am not going to take you far this afternoon," she said: "we will only take a turn in the village, and perhaps up to Naboth's Vineyard, and by that time we shall be ready for tea; for I understand, that you are to expect company, Sir, this afternoon."

"Company!" I repeated, rather in astonishment; "perhaps Dr. Beauchamp may intend to honour me with a call?"

"No, Sir," she replied: "the good doctor would have been here as soon as he heard that you had left your room, but he has been absent for several days with his lady and family, and Master Lovel. Your intended visiter is Miss Lucy, who brought some rusks while you were at dinner, having heard that you were fond of them; and at the same time announced her intended presence at tea this evening."

"Thrice welcome be the lovely little fairy," I said. "Lucy must always be welcome."

"Well, Sir," continued Mrs. Goodwill, "now for our review of the other side of the parish. Please to imagine yourself on the top of the coach, passing along the road under the plantations of Roxobel."

"Indeed, my excellent Mrs. Goodwill," I answered, "I would rather imagine myself where I am. What business had such a little Phaëton as myself to be mounted so high as I was before my fall? what had I to do on the top of a coach? I think I was lightly dealt with that I came off only with a few broken bones; so, pray do not carry me back to the turnpike road under the Roxobel woods."

"Then, Sir," said Mrs. Goodwill, "we will, if you please, turn out of the road at the porter's lodge, and come up the long avenue which leads to the Hall, and to the village. We need not enter in at the gates of the offices, but come on straight to the village, the first house of which, on the left hand, is Mr. Barnaby Semple's, the

only new house in Roxobel: and on the right is this old mansion in which we are now sitting, which once belonged to the family-steward; but, since the steward, Mr. Jeffry Griffin, has lived in his own rooms at the Hall, it has been appropriated to Mr. Strickland. Beyond these two houses, the village begins to ascend, forming a pretty steep street, which is terminated by the park-gates, and by a fine prospect of woods. There are about a dozen cottages in the street, all thatched, and standing in gardens; besides four bettermost houses; namely, the shop kept by Mr. Smith, who married Mrs. Winifred Helmsley's fostersister; the Helmsley Arms public-house, kept by the old butler and housekeeper of the family, who made a match about ten years ago; and Finchley Cottage, where the three Misses Finchley reside, living on their own private property, being distant relations of Mrs. Nuttall. And between Finchley Cottage, as the house is now called, and the Helmsley Arms, is a by-road which leads to the Rock Hamlet; and a by-road, indeed, it is,

and a deep road too; for in winter time, I have known the farmers to be obliged to get spade and pickaxe, to dig out the carts, which have sunk in the ruts. So much, Sir, for the village, with whose inhabitants I expect you will have opportunities of making yourself better acquainted at a future time: for I should have informed you, that the Misses Finchley have already indicated their expectations that you will pay them a visit. We will now therefore leave the precincts of Roxobel, pass through the park-gates, and pursue the path which winds along the brow of the hill, and among the woods, to Naboth's Vineyard."

Here I could not help interrupting the speaker. "You have twice used the term Naboth's Vineyard, Mrs. Goodwill," I said: "what can you possibly mean?"

She smiled, and replied, "Have I, Sir? Then it was without intention: and this shews how careful we should be in adopting foolish expressions. But the place I mean is Torville. It is situated on the very brow of the park, facing the Hall; and it

has been named in derision Naboth's Vineyard, for a reason which I will explain. It is a little freehold estate of about seven hundred acres, and has long been in possession of a family of the name of Torville, a family which has always prided itself on its antiquity; its ancestors having been Norman, as it is asserted, and having come to England with William the Conqueror. However this may be, it is very certain, from the Roxobel register, that the family has long resided in the parish, and were in their pride before the name of Helmsley had ever been repeated by a single echo. Indeed, the monuments in the church speak for the antiquity of the family; and there is one, especially, of a Knight Templar, which is highly prized by Dr. Beauchamp, around which he has persuaded Mrs. Winifred to place an iron rail, to prevent the figure from being defaced. However, in the time of Oliver Cromwell, and during the changes which then took place, the Helmsleys rose, and the Torvilles fell; this last family parting, little by little, with all its ancient lands and lordships, till

nothing remained belonging to it but a part of the old mansion, or tower, of Torville, and the ground immediately around it.

"The Torvilles were, however, allowed to keep this little possession in peace, till the father of the present ladies bethought himself of extending his park over the brow of the hill, from the Hall to the Fall Woods, and from the warren on one side to the lands and farm in the dingle, between Roxobel and the Rock Hamlet on the other. With this view he bought up several little patches of freehold, and placed his eyes on Torville, being determined, either by hook or by crook, to make himself master of it. The estate was not then entailed, the entail having been destroyed some time before, in favour of a daughter's children. Hence there was no hindrance to his obtaining possession, excepting the will of the owner.

"Torville was then occupied by an old man, who had two sons. The old man cordially hated, and probably envied Mr. Helmsley; and, in consequence, declared that he would rather perish by famine than part with one inch of the old Torville estates to

any Helmsley under the sun. The old man was, however, at length, called upon to pay the debt of nature, and Mr. Helmsley immediately applied to the eldest son, James Torville, to sell the estate, making extremely advantageous offers of money, or exchange of land. The young man appeared very willing to close with Mr. Helmsley's proposals; but ere the business was concluded he disappeared, and no one ever discovered what was become of him.

"Mr. Helmsley endeavoured to fasten the suspicion of murder on John Torville, the younger brother, and his newly married wife; John having incurred the hatred of Mr. Helmsley by the violent opposition which he had made to the sale of the estate while it was in the power of his brother, and by the determination which he still expressed, to do all that in him lay, while life should last, to keep the old roundhead family, as he always termed that of the Helmsleys, out of the noble halls of Torville.

"Mr. Helmsley left no means untried to bring the shame and disgrace due to mur-

der, upon John Torville; but, as the body of the deceased was never found, no legal trial could take place: yet the cruel purposes of the persecutor were not without their consequences: for John Torville, feeling himself to be an object of universal suspicion, became gloomy and morose, and died within five years after his brother's disappearance.

"James Torville, were he living," continued Mrs. Goodwill, "would be about the age of Mrs. Winifred, and John only a few years younger. James Torville has been missing more than thirty years. The widow of John Torville still survives, but never makes her appearance in public. Her establishment consists of a labouring man and his wife, of the name of Rawson; stern, ill-conditioned, gloomy persons, without any apparent sense of religion or propriety, being never seen within the walls of a church, or of any other place consecrated to religious purposes. The widow keeps poultry, cows, and many dogs; but no stranger is ever admitted beyond the gates of the court-yard, which are always locked.

"Moreover, the old mansion has never undergone any repairs but such as could be made by Christopher Rawson, who is a sort of Jack-of-all-trades. No trees have ever been cut down, nor has a single branch been lopped, with the permission of the owner: in consequence of which, the woods which encompass the house, are as complicated and intertangled, as the forest which is described to have grown up around the castle of the Sleeping Beauty; and if a light now and then be perceived to glimmer through the gloom, the common people presently make out a story of the ghost of James Torville.

"You will have pleasure, I am sure, Sir," continued Mrs. Goodwill, "in examining the place; though it is a sad eyesore to Mrs. Winifred, and an inconvenience also, as the widow has the right of carriage-road through both sides of the park:—nevertheless, the story of Ahab and Naboth should be a warning to us how we covet the property of others."

In this part of our story, we were interrupted by Miss Lucy, whose infant voice

was heard some minutes before she entered the room, giving me time to enquire how it happened that the little lady had so much liberty to visit where and when she chose.

"Ah, Sir," replied Mrs. Goodwill, "I hope that this liberty may not prove a snare to her: for as long as she sits still and behaves prettily when summoned to the Brown Parlour, her aunts are satisfied, and take no further cognizance of her proceedings. As to the rest, they leave her to take her chance: but the Almighty is good, and has hitherto tempered the wind to this shorn lamb."

"Well," I replied, "it shall be my care, that the little lady shall receive no ill counsel from myself: nevertheless, I do not advise my friends to trust their children with persons of whom they know as little as the good people of Roxobel know of me."

Miss Lucy's entrance put a stop to this discourse; and one of a more childish nature then ensued.

I had a fourth conversation with Mrs. Goodwill the next day; in the course of

which she made me acquainted with several other characters in Roxobel. Among these was Black Tom, the warrener, who, I found, was supposed to be as worthy of being transported for poaching, as any man in the three kingdoms. This man, as Mrs. Goodwill informs me, lives in the Warrener's Lodge, which is a sort of tower of great antiquity, keeping company, it is suspected, with some of the worst people in the country;—among whom is a gang of gipsies, who haunt these parts, and are a bane and terror to the whole neighbourhood, on account of their idle habits of fortune-telling and pilfering; though, being strong in the favour of Mrs. Winifred, their little encampments are never allowed to be disturbed. Mrs. Goodwill then led me from the Warrener's Lodge back again to the park, informing me, that behind the parsonage, in a very deep valley, lie three pools, called the Upper Pool, the Swan's Pool, and the Lower Pool; that on the bank of the Lower Pool stands an old house, which had been formerly occupied by a dowager of the Helmsley

family, wherein live the gamekeeper, his wife, and one daughter, at this time but a child; and that just above the Upper Pool, on a high neck of land overhanging it, is a large farm-house, situated beyond the verge of the park, though appearing to the spectator below as if peeping from the woods within the park, near to a superb fall of water.

Mrs. Goodwill also informed me, that this farm-house has for its occupant a man of the name of Taylor, whose wife being one of the old school, rises at four in the morning, and calls her maids to their work with a voice which out-roars the cataract, or rather out-shrieks the owls that harbour in the rocks from which it falls.

"Worthy people these," she said,—"kind to those who serve them; and, though living in a kitchen, richer than many who inhabit their ceiled parlours."

Mrs. Goodwill also described another farm-house, as standing on the other side of the park, by the river, and she mentioned a miller wh[illegible] a very flashy wife residing on the river's brink.

She finished her narrative by taking me on an imaginative ramble up the meadows for two miles or more, till she brought me across a dingle, and up a steep winding path, leading to the western quarter of Roxobel; "where," as she said, "runs a hollow winding valley, opening northward; at the bottom of which is a rugged broken rock bulging from the hill; on the various shelving ledges of which are many little cottages and gardens, all more lovely one than another; and there," said she, "about halfway up, is my little tenement, and just below me, my daughter's house, and on the right a pretty cottage, the best of the cluster, standing in a garden, sheltered by a point of the rock from the north wind. Here lives a very old man who was once gardener at the Hall, a sort of humourist, who devotes his whole time to the cultivation of his flowers, and the adornment of a little hermitage, which is partly natural and partly scooped by art. We call him Peter Wild," she said, "and no doubt he will be proud to shew you his hermitage, S[illegible]d his flowers; especially if you will bestow on him

a few shells, or bits of coloured glass, to add to his collection."

"I shall hope to pay my respects to Mr. Peter Wild," I answered, "as well as to all your good neighbours on the rock, Mrs. Goodwill; and you must do me the honour of introducing me."

"And now, Sir," remarked Mrs. Goodwill, "I think I have done my part; and, in some degree, made you acquainted with all the distinguished characters in Roxobel. On the whole, I think, that we are not a very bad set: though, to be sure, there are some black sheep in our flock."

I felt very well satisfied with this general outline of the history of the place in which I had resolved to fix the curtains of my habitation, and began to be almost impatient of the weakness which kept me on my couch in this, one of the finest months of the year.

CHAPTER V.

Dated some days after the former.

THIS morning, my packages arrived, and were brought up to the village in a cart. I went down to inspect them. The whole village was up. Mr Barnaby Semple called over the street, and said, "I am glad to see this, Sir; it looks as if we were likely to keep you some time with us." The larger packages were then removed into my landlady's hall, and the lesser ones up to my room. I opened my box of varieties immediately, in order to select some presents. I was unable to do any thing towards it myself; but Mrs. Strickland and Mrs. Goodwill were at hand. The lid was nailed down so strongly, that we were obliged to call over to Mr. Barnaby, who was standing in

his shop-door. He came very willingly, as if he had been waiting only for the invitation: but there was another person before him; it was Miss Lucy, who was down on her knees, in a moment, lending a helping hand. Mr. Barnaby soon forced up the deal lid, and laughing, asked me if I meant to set up a shop in Roxobel. Mrs. Strickland opened a large cupboard in the wainscot, called the maid to dust it down, and we began to unpack. My commissioner had executed my commands wonderfully well. Here was a sufficient supply of shawls, gowns, ribands, pictures, and wooden babies; besides knives, whips, tops, scissars, and an infinitude of other curiosities. I begged Miss Lucy to select a baby for herself, and another for her best friend; on which she whispered the name Sophia. I also gave her two or three gilt books, and some coloured prints for her brother and his friend. I then made my presents to Mrs. Goodwill, and Mrs. Strickland, and to the servant-maid; and begged Mr. Semple to accept a gold ring set with a handsome stone, which he

immediately placed on his little finger. The two elderly women seemed rather disinclined to receive their presents, alleging that they had already been handsomely paid; but the servant-maid used no such ceremony: and as to Miss Lucy, she was far too much excited, to pay compliments on the occasion. She sparkled, and smiled, and glowed, and laughed, and was the very picture of innocent joy. At length, the curiosity of all parties being fully satisfied, the uproar subsided; and Mrs. Strickland stowed away all that remained of the contents of the box, locked up the cupboard, begged me to take care of the key, courtesied again, removed the packing-cases, swept the room, and went off in triumph.

In the evening, after tea, Mrs. Goodwill proposed a walk. "You are now quite fit for such an exertion, Sir," she said; "and, perhaps, you would like to take a view of the Hall?"

"I should wish to call on Miss Lucy," I replied; "but I think that I will wait till I can also pay a visit in form to the ladies, and it must not be at this hour. We will,

therefore, if agreeable, pay our compliments now to Mrs. Tristram."

We accordingly set out, being provided with a present of a shawl and of a few books for this excellent person; but we had scarcely arrived in the street before we were met by Miss Lucy and her maid; when the young lady insisted on being permitted to accompany us, pleading to her maid that she might always be trusted with Mrs. Goodwill. The little pleader soon prevailed; and we walked around the house, and entered into the park just under the iron palisades of the Hall garden. The scene was most lovely, and I stopped a few minutes to contemplate it, turning myself around in all directions. The noble old mansion, with its eight cupolas, and its dome in the centre, faced me to the south. Elevated, as it were, on a terrace above the gardens, and bordered by many trees to the north, arose the park, a region rich in beauty, broken into dales and uplands, lawns and majestic groves; while a waterfall, tumbling from the higher regions, was then sparkling in the evening sun, and

presented the appearance of a cluster of diamonds set in a border of emerald. Before us, as we advanced towards the east, was the church, embosomed in a thick grove; a venerable Gothic structure, which reminded the beholder of remote ages, and generations passed away. I was filled with rapture, and Mrs. Goodwill had discernment enough to let me enjoy my delight without interruption. As to little Lucy, she had run gaily forward, to announce our approach to Mrs. Tristram.

We wound round the porch of the church, and entered the churchyard, where, straight before us, was the school-house, a building which, like the sacred edifice near to which it stood, reminded of elder days.

Miss Lucy was tapping at Mrs. Tristram's door as we came in sight. Mrs. Goodwill expressed a hope that we might not be obliged to encounter the schoolmaster; and, to avoid this, we hurried onward, entering into a narrow passage which intersects the mistress's tenement, having the door of the kitchen on one side, and that of the school-room on the other.

At the kitchen-door, Miss Lucy was ready to hand me in, and to introduce me to Mrs. Tristram, which ceremony she performed in her own peculiar way, one which is at once sweet and easy, without the least tendency towards vulgar familiarity; for she is the little lady in all that she does, exacting respect in the best and truest mode, by always paying it to the uttermost.

"This is the gentleman, Mrs. Tristram," she said, "who gave me the doll, and sent one for Sophia; and he is come to live at Roxobel; and he is very kind, and wishes us all to love him; and I am come here with him; and I am sure that you are very glad to see him."

The room into which I was ushered was a large, old-fashioned, vaulted kitchen, bearing the appearance of having been lately whitewashed. It was hung around with kitchen-articles, all of superlative brightness, and arranged with great attention to order. The fire-place had been constructed on a small scale suitable to the establishment, and displayed on its neat mantleshelf some pretty figures of Dresden

china which spoke of better days. Above the chimneypiece hung an old portrait, and before the hearth lay a little square of carpeting. Mrs. Tristram, though tall, was spare in her person; and, though she seemed to be dressed with great attention to neatness, yet her drapery exhibited that sort of scantiness which betokens poverty. She had been sitting by the open window, working at a small, round, mahogany board, the scolloped border of which indicated, that it had been designed for the purpose of arranging the paraphernalia of the tea-table. Near to this little table sat a very old woman in a wicker chair, her countenance betraying marked indications of a second childhood. By her stood a little girl, who was, as I afterwards understood, supported by Mrs. Tristram, from motives of charity. Both the old woman and the child were more comfortably clad than the mistress of the house, and shewed fewer evidences in their features of a too spare diet. They also looked cheerful; and the old lady seemed inclined to begin to talk, and, perhaps, would thus have confirmed my opinion of

her imbecility, had she not been checked by the child, who drew off her attention to an object without the window.

Mrs. Tristram received me in a manner which spoke much in her favour, but was anticipated by Miss Lucy in her attempts to set me a chair. I began the conversation by speaking with admiration of the view from her window, on which she made some remark expressive of her gratitude for the great comforts of her situation; among which, she particularized, as one of her chief benefits, the Christian society and Christian instruction which she had the happiness of enjoying.

I had brought a small gift with me for this excellent individual, but should hardly have known how to have presented it, had I not been helped through my difficulty by the ever ready Lucy, who straightways informed the schoolmistress of my intentions, and begged to be permitted to open the packet.

When Mrs. Tristram saw the contents of the parcel, she blushed slightly, and said, "You are a stranger, Sir, to me, and I scarcely know how to account for this ge-

nerosity. I would not wish to be too ready to receive presents, however acceptable they may be, unless I could imagine any way in which it might be possible for me to evince my gratitude."

"If I must explain myself, then," I replied, "the truth of the matter is this,—that I am a solitary being, of whom the friends who loved me in my youth are now no more; and the society in which I once moved does not now accord with my feelings. I have therefore been for some time a wanderer. Providence threw me in a helpless state on the kindness of strangers: and such has been my reception among them, such the congeniality to my feelings of the charming scenery which surrounds their habitations, such the promise of comfort in my present dwelling, that I am resolved to set up my tabernacle in this happy spot. But I must have my friends. I must be cared for by some persons; and I am come to you to say, that I shall desire of you to number yourself among my wellwishers, and to be prepared to take an interest in my welfare."

"That is, until I am found unfit for your

favour, Sir," said she. "I have already heard much of you. Roxobel is not so large a place that a stranger can visit it without observation; and I needed not these handsome presents to induce me to become one of your wellwishers.

"And now, Sir," she added, "you shall have the pleasure of seeing my poor mother arrayed in this handsome shawl. My poor mother!" she repeated: "I thank God, Sir, that she has the harmlessness as well as the imbecility of infancy. She will be delighted with these brilliant colours. The time was, dear Sir, when she was the wisest and the best of parents. But we may look at her now, and cease to glory in the strength of human intellect."

So saying, she folded the shawl, and placed it across the old lady's shoulders, who startled me by the expression of childish delight which she exhibited on the occasion; an expression which would have been sweetly suited to the dimpled features of infancy, but was here frightfully contrasted with the wrinkles of age.

Mrs. Tristram observed my change of

countenance, and said, "Ah, Sir! it is, indeed, a melancholy sight—a humbling sight! but, blessed be God, she retains a strong sense of religion; and I often see her kneeling by her bed-side, and hear her simple and humble supplications to the throne of grace. And she is also very happy, Sir; especially since I got little Margaret to attend her. The child is very good to her; and, therefore, I shall, with your permission, present her with one of these little gilt books."

In this part of our conversation we were startled by a loud knock at the door, and I instantly rec[illegible] Mr. Pen Map, who strutted into the [illegible] and made a flourishing bow. I do not recollect much that he said. He apologized for the intrusion; but added, that it was owing to his anxiety to see one of whom he had already heard so much. I shook hands with him, promised him a visit, and told him that I should have the pleasure ere long of presenting him with a few books. We then took our leave, and returned home.

This morning, just as I had written so far, a messenger arrived from the Hall with

the ladies' compliments; adding, that, if agreeable to me, they would pay me a visit in half an hour.

What an uproar, what a bustle, did this message excite in poor Mrs. Strickland's house! It might have been supposed that the king, queen, and all the royal family, were about to make their appearance; and we were scarcely all set in "apple-pie order," before the three ladies appeared in sight, threading the mazes of the garden, habited in their hoops, *néglig és*, hoods, and long ruffles, being preceded at some distance by a footman, and followed by Mr. Porter, the butler or major-domo. It is very impolite to be seen peeping;—I therefore shrunk from the window, at the moment that a turn of the walk brought the procession in a line with me, and had scarcely time to gather up my features into a solemnity befitting the occasion, before the high heels of the ladies were heard rattling upon the stairs;—added to which was a peculiar rustling, which indicated the richness of the silks that composed the *négligés*.

Mrs. Goodwill had placed herself at the further end of my room, to be ready to hand the cake and chocolate, and Mrs. Strickland stood outside the door; which being opened wide, Mrs. Winifred entered first, Mrs. Grizzy followed, and Mrs. Judy brought up the rear;—an order of march from which these excellent personages have never been known to deviate for the last forty years.

There is so much of the old-fashioned gentlewoman in Mrs. Winifred, that it is impossible not to feel respect for her the moment she appears. As to the other two, I have not yet looked long enough at either of them to know what they are; excepting, that they are less than Mrs. Winifred, but dressed exactly in her style. They impressed me with the feeling that they had no character of their own, but that they were mere echoes and shadows of their more substantial elder.

The three ladies formed into line, just within the door of my apartment, and dropped very deep courtesies; which acquired additional grace from the dimen-

sions of their hoops, and the richness of their silks; which, not giving way as they bent their knees, formed a very elegant circle around each individual. On the other hand, I trust that I was not backward in proving my good breeding.—I arose from my chair at the moment the ladies appeared—I advanced in front of their line—I waved my single arm, my other arm being confined by the sling—and I bowed profoundly to each lady. I then presented my hand to Mrs. Winifred, and was successful in getting all the three sisters duly seated according to their birthrights, in less time, and with less confusion, than I had at first anticipated. This being done, and before I resumed my seat, I, as in politeness bound, made an acknowledgment of the high and deep sense which I entertained of the favour conferred on me: and I was very well pleased with my own manner of bringing the words *honour, obligation, distinction, exalted birth, superior rank, high station,* to stand in contrast with those of *stranger unknown, little importance, without friends,*

having no claims, and so on. In reply to my elegant harangue, the three ladies bowed; yet not at once, but according to their respective seniority: and when I ceased to speak, Mrs. Winifred said, "I beg, Sir, that you will not stand; you must remember your accident and late fever, and not try your constitution too much."

"And not try your constitution too much," repeated Mrs. Grizzy.

"Too much," re-echoed Mrs. Judy.

Being thus politely pressed, what could I do but sit down? And then Mrs. Winifred made me a very handsome speech, in which she most kindly offered me every accommodation which her library or garden would afford; superadding some pretty compliments, in rather a low tone, of which I recollect only these words:—"Handsome present—my niece—agreeable neighbour—great acquisition—manners that mark the gentleman!"

"That mark the gentleman!" repeated Mrs. Grizzy.

"The gentleman!" reiterated Mrs. Judy.

It must be observed, that, as Mrs. Wini-

fred concluded her speech, I bowed; and my bow was brought lower and lower as her last words were passed along the line in faint and fainter echoes.

I then thought it right to account for my continuance at Roxobel, by informing the ladies, that being wholly independent of connexions in society, and having an easy fortune, I had long been in quest of an agreeable situation wherein to sit down during the remainder of my life; and that having by a strange accident been made to remain awhile in this delightful village, I had formed so strong an attachment to the place, that I had conceived a wish to live and die where I was; adding, that I was more than satisfied with the reception I had received, and that I could not and did not expect any further testimonies of regard or confidence, till my conduct and behaviour for a considerable length of time had fully proved my real character.

Mrs. Winifred replied, that what I said was at once candid and rational; and that she hoped and believed that nothing would ever arise to compel her to alter

the good opinion which she had formed of me.

"To alter the good opinion which my sister has formed of you, Sir," said Mrs. Grizzy.

"Which my sister has formed of you, Sir," said Mrs. Judy.

I had three bows prepared, in reply to these speeches of the three ladies, and they were not merely bows of form but of feeling; although I could scarcely repress my mirth at the whimsical habit which the younger sisters had acquired of continually performing the parts of Echo to their elder.

Soon after these compliments had been concluded, the chocolate was handed round, of which my company partook with considerable relish; and I then succeeded in conducting them from the house, in as much order, and with as much ceremony, as that which was observed on their entrance; after which, we parted in the street with many courtesies on both sides.

As soon as the ladies were gone, Mrs. Strickland came up to felicitate me on the compliment which had been paid me; and

I could not help smiling at the stress which she laid upon this visit; a stress which reminded me of a reflection that I had often made, of the tendency of the mind to magnify those objects which are under continual observation. Poor Mrs. Strickland had lived at Roxobel, till she could imagine nothing on earth so great, or of so much consequence, as the Mrs. Helmsleys. In her judgment, poor woman, these three old ladies were the very centre and fountain of all human glory; and it was not my business to endeavour to undeceive her, especially at the moment in which I really felt myself most obliged to these excellent spinsters.

CHAPTER VI.

A VISIT TO THE HALL.

My strength being now greatly restored, I informed my worthy friend, Mrs. Goodwill, that I should soon be able to dispense with her attentions. "You shall help me," I said, "to arrange all my possessions, and then you shall return to your little cottage; and be assured, that, as soon as I feel myself equal to the undertaking, I shall pay my compliments to you in your own house."

This day, after breakfast, having sent for the joiner of the village, I set him to work to make me some bookcases; and I sent to my friend the grocer, at Beckington, to procure some person who could put up my organ; for I cannot live without music. These things being put in hand, I assumed my best coat and my cocked hat, (for I like

to pay every possible respect to the ladies,) and descended my stairs with that determined air which people assume when they have resolved upon an expedition of some importance. ' Mrs. Strickland regarded me with satisfaction as I passed through her hall, and complimented me on my amended looks.

I was just stepping out into the street, (for we call the lane which intersects our half-dozen cottages at Roxobel, the street,) when the blooming Lucy, running some paces in advance of her maid, appeared before me, and understanding my purpose, slipped her dimpled hand within my arm, and declared her determination to become my guide.

To have this child of ten years old, lovely as she is, leaning on my arm, with a feeling of equality, was certainly derogatory to my dignity. However, what could I do? It was not possible for me to offend the little fairy who had associated herself thus familiarly with me: I therefore delivered myself up with a good grace to the guidance of the young

lady, and was led by her through various embowered walks, and along several grassy terraces, till I found myself in the wide area in front of the mansion. We then ascended a high flight of stone steps, and entered a noble hall, encircled by a wide gallery, or corridor, into which opened the doors of many upper chambers. The light thrown on this hall, was from a lofty window in the south, richly decorated with painted glass.

At the entrance of the hall, Lucy directed me to wait, being observant of some domestic rule, by which, it seems, that it was not permitted for me to advance a step further, on this my first visit, unless introduced by that most respectable and portly gentleman-usher, Mr. Porter, the butler, who presently appeared from the same wide door-way through which the little lady had disappeared. By this most important personage I was ushered from the hall along an extensive matted gallery to the common sitting-room of the family, where a door being thrown widely open, I saw before me an immense,

gloomy, oak wainscoted parlour, hung with family portraits in the most abominable taste; each smirking lady, in trebled ruffles, having a gentleman opposite to her in a tie-wig, and a waistcoat with long flaps. There was no carpet in this comfortless apartment; but the floor was so nicely waxed, that I had some difficulty in entering into the august presence of the ladies in any other way than by a long slide succeeded by a grievous fall.

In the centre of the room, seated in a semicircle, were the three ladies, a well-polished table being placed before them, though apparently for no other earthly purpose than form, it being entirely bare; though the ladies were not idle, for they were knitting with great vivacity.

On the annunciation of my name, the ladies arose, and the ceremony of low courtesies and profound bows then ensued; after which, I took the chair which had been placed for me by Mr. Porter directly opposite my three hostesses.

We were silent, after the first compliments, till Mr. Porter was gone out; after

which, I said something, which I meant to be very well spoken, on the magnificence of the house, and the beautiful prospects which it commanded: and this being handsomely taken, I ventured some more remarks in the same strain, and, if I mistake not, succeeded in making my company exceedingly acceptable: for Mrs. Winifred looked very graciously, and said several agreeable things, which I could not easily forget, as the echoes did not fail to perform their office on every occasion which a pause in the conversation afforded them. There was, however, some variety in the tones of the three, to compound for the deficiency of that agreeable quality in their sentiments: Mrs. Judy's voice being small and weak although high-set, Mrs. Grizzy's remarkably deep, and Mrs. Winifred's in other respects somewhat peculiar. Upon the whole, however, I was not sorry when this interview was interrupted by the re-appearance of Mr. Porter bearing chocolate on a salver of massive silver richly embossed. Mr. Porter was followed by a gaunt female, dressed in faded silk and a fly-cap

with lappets, whom I instantly recognized as the renowned Mrs. Nuttall, being assured that I could not be mistaken, inasmuch as her person reminded me of Mrs. Goodwill's history of the small-pox, the recent ravages of which terrrible disease were still very evident upon her face. In looking upon her, I could not help sympathizing with Sancho Panza, who describes himself as having had a natural antipathy to duennas; and, as the waiting-maid approached, I felt a sort of creeping or shuddering throughout my whole frame, for which I could give no rational account, as the dame was all smirking civility, and pressed me most graciously to partake of some very rich cake, several sorts of which she tendered for my acceptance.

"And to what are we indebted for your company, Nuttall?" said Mrs. Winifred, half familiarly—half angrily, as I thought: "but I suppose that you wished to see our new friend?"

"You wished to see our new friend?" reverberated Mrs. Grizzy.

"Our new friend?" repeated Mrs. Judy.

"I came, ladies," replied the housekeeper, "to offer my services to shew the gentleman through the house, after he has taken his chocolate."

"Very right, Nuttall," said Mrs. Winifred.

"Right, Nuttall," said Mrs. Grizzy.

"Nuttall," said Mrs. Judy.

Accordingly, the chocolate being duly sipped, I arose, took my leave, and was conducted by the housekeeper throughout the spacious mansion, being introduced into every apartment which was open to the view of strangers.

I do not love descriptions of fine places nor of fine furniture. On the present occasion, it is perhaps sufficient to say, that I was really gratified by the antique magnificence of Roxobel Hall, and that I regarded the library with that kind of interest which an epicure might be supposed to take in the luxurious contemplation of a rich and royal repast. I did not, however, forget the advantage which the intellectual cormorant possesses over the natural one: being duly sensible, that the enjoyment and

the appetite of the former become quickened by indulgence, while those of the latter become clogged and satiated.

When all had been seen which it was requisite to see, Mrs. Nuttall brought me down a back staircase, and, stopping at the door of her own parlour in the offices, invited me to walk in.

As the duenna had given herself so much trouble on my account, and was a person of so much consequence at the Hall, I neither considered it to be good manners, nor good policy, to reject her suit; being apprehensive lest by some underhand manœuvre, of a kind which ladies' maids and other politicians so well understand, I should be debarred from those visits to the library on which I had set my heart so deeply. I therefore did not hesitate to accept Mrs. Nuttall's invitation; and was ushered into a large and lofty room, which I should have thought tolerably comfortable had it not smelt of plum-cakes, brandy, and lemons, none of which articles are agreeable to me.

This chamber seemed to be literally lined

with cupboards, which were indicated by bunches of keys dangling here and there from the wainscoted wall. Over the chimneypiece hung a large unframed painting, representing a boy in a jockey cap with a face like the knave of spades, leading a horse well curried and docked, and trimmed with great accuracy. In the back-ground of this picture, appeared a race-ground and booths; and I could not help remarking, that whereas the sky in the painting was as hard as that of the frozen zone, the grass was as green and as smooth as that of a swamp in Bengal.

On Mrs. Nuttall's remarking that my eye rested on this picture, I enquired who the youth there represented might be, and was told that he was no other than the late 'squire himself, who had been accounted in his day an exceedingly handsome man.

This portrait of the 'squire was the only piece of furniture, of which I took any particular notice in this apartment, with the exception of a large, old-fashioned, greasy couch; though I certainly did observe, that there was as motley an assemblage of

old-fashioned chairs, tables, desks, and wardrobes, as ever were congregated in any housekeeper's or steward's room that I had hitherto chanced to visit.

The study of human nature is my peculiar delight; and hence, every new scene seems to unfold a fresh page of my favourite volume. On the present occasion, I had reason to consider Mrs. Nuttall herself as presenting no uninteresting specimen of the *gens humana:* nor was I long in the company of this precise and demure duenna, without inferring from certain circumstances, that she entertained some schemes which had not yet specifically disclosed themselves to my penetration. Some object beyond the simple desire of filling her purse, and providing a comfortable nest for herself in her old age, seemed to occupy her attention. What this object was, however, I could not even surmise, although I felt an ardent curiosity to discover it, and with that desire I no doubt looked rather more intently upon her, while conversing with her, than was perfectly polite; for I remarked, that her eye fell under mine seve-

ral times in the course of our interview, and that she seemed half afraid of me. Yet, notwithstanding my intimidating aspect, she was extremely attentive to me; and was by no means discouraged from attempting to elicit from me what I thought of the individuals in the parish with whom I had already become acquainted; in which attempt, however, I completely baffled her, by bestowing a certain degree of praise indiscriminately on every one.

While the housekeeper and myself were thus engaged in mutual attempts to understand each other better, a bushy red head was suddenly obtruded into the room from an inner door, and as quickly withdrawn; though the door was not pulled to after the owner of the bush. The quick eye of Mrs. Nuttall caught the object, though it had disappeared so suddenly, and although she sat with her back more turned towards the door than mine was: and she instantly called aloud, "Is it you, Taffy? is it you, nephew? Come in, my dear: it's only Mr. Airley who is with me."

This call brought the head forward

again, but no other part of the body yet became visible: on which, the housekeeper addressing herself to me, said, "It is my nephew, Sir, David Nuttall: the dear boy is just come for a day's holiday from Beckington, where he is at the grammar-school; but he is so modest, Sir, so bashful, he don't like to come in when there's company." And then the duenna, turning to the door, behind which the head had again disappeared, made me start with the shrill tone in which she vociferated, "Come forward, Taffy, can't you? Don't be so shamefaced. It's only Mr. Airley paying his first visit at the Hall. What makes you so uncommon shy?"

At this second summons, a great lubberly boy of about fourteen, with a bushy red head, large dull light eyes, and a somewhat bottle nose, entered the room, and stood about a second looking at me, measuring me from head to foot, with his eye, as it were, much in the same manner as that in which the giant is said to have measured Tom Thumb.

"It's Mr. Airley, Taffy," said the house-

keeper. "Where's your bow? Why don't you speak to the gentleman? What do you stand staring there for, looking as if you was lost in a wood?" And then turning to me, and assuming a pathetic tone, she added, "You can't think, Mr. Airley, how shocking bad the boy's manners have become since he went to Beckington!"

I have a great notion of my own dignity, and therefore could not think of making the first approach towards this youth. I thought I did quite enough in being prepared to receive any advances which the young gentleman might choose to make towards me. I therefore remained perfectly still, trying if I could distinguish in the boy any symptoms of that modesty and bashfulness to which his aunt had alluded. Mrs. Nuttall, however, who is a sort of Juno in her temper, appeared to feel highly provoked at her nephew's rudeness: and being resolved to combat his obstinacy, she bade him either make me a due reverence, or else leave the room.

On this he honoured me with a sort of nod, muttering something of which I heard

only my own name: after which, turning abruptly to his aunt, he said, "I came here for my snaffle: give me my snaffle, and then I'll go."

"And is my apartment a proper place," exclaimed the indignant spinster, "wherein you expect to find the furniture of your horse? Is this room a proper depository for whips, and boots, and bridles? Go to the groom, and to the stables, and look your rubbish there. What have I to do with such trash?"

"It a'n't in the stable," replied the boy.

"May be not," she replied: "neither is it here. I tell you, that no such trumpery shall ever be harboured in my parlour."

The boy did not seem to pay the slightest attention to the angry exclamations of his aunt, but proceeded to scrutinize every corner of the room, opening cupboard after cupboard, in pursuit of his bridle, while the fiery eyes of his incensed relative pursued him through all his researches.

"Cannot you let the cupboards alone, Taffy?" she at length enquired.

The boy still persevered in his undertak-

ing, with the most perfect coolness and determination of manner.

"What do you want?" repeated the dame, stamping her foot as she sat on the sofa. "Can't you leave Mr. Airley and me to converse in peace? What, I say, do you come here for? what do you want?"

"My snaffle," replied the boy.

"You are looking for the cake, that you are," exclaimed Mrs. Nuttall; "but it is out of your reach; you can't get at it." And then addressing me, she said, "I am always forced to lock up the cake when he is at home, Mr. Airley, or we should never have any at command."

"I don't want no cake, aunt," remarked the boy: "I want my snaffle."

"And what," said the indignant spinster, "what, I ask, have I to do with your snaffle? Get away with you to the stable;—which, let me tell you, is the properest place for you."

"I sha'n't go till I've found my snaffle," said the boy.

"You are not going to ride, are you?" asked the aunt.

"I am though," replied young Hopeful.

"And what animal are you going to mount?" enquired Mrs. Nuttall. "You surely are not going to ride the roan mare?"

The boy nodded his answer to this last question.

"Did not my lady forbid you to cross the roan, the very last time you were here, Sir?" said the duenna.

"She did," replied the boy.

"And will you dare to disobey her, Taffy?" asked the housekeeper.

"Ye'es," replied the boy, smiling: "I will try how she will take it."

"Indeed!" I said, putting in my voice when perhaps I should have done better to have been silent, "and you really will?—and how do you expect that your disobedience will be looked upon?"

Had a cricket chirped at the boy's feet, he would probably have taken about as much notice of it, as he seemed to take of my remark; and I think that he treated me very properly, as I was certainly meddling with what did not concern me. But he returned to the charge against his aunt,

with the most determined perseverance, saying, "I know, aunt, that the snaffle is in this here room."

"Was there ever on the face of the earth," exclaimed Mrs. Nuttall, "a creature so tiresome and troublesome as you are, Taffy? I wish to my heart there were no such things as holidays." And then, turning to me, "It is always so, Mr. Airley," she said. "When Taffy is at home, then farewell to peace:—it's always just as you see; I am teazed out of my very life."

Before I could reply, the persevering tormentor, after fumbling under the couch where his aunt was seated, and bringing out various articles of the rubbish which had gathered under it; (for there is not a better slut-hole in the world than an old-fashioned sofa or couch, provided the cover be but wide and large enough;) at length, drew forth, with a roar of exultation, this same snaffle which had caused so much disturbance. "Did I not tell you it was in this room? did I not?" said the unmannered lad, holding up the snaffle;

"and you would have, it was not.—Just like you, aunt Nuttall!—just like you!"

"Get out with you, you ill-mannered lad," cried the aunt, "and take your rubbish with you!" and then rising in high displeasure, she had laid her hand on his shoulder, to push him out of the room, when a door which opened in the direction of the great hall was gently opened, and Miss Lucy appeared, evidently looking for me; but she scarcely had had time to step forward into the room, when Master Taffy sprang towards her, and throwing his bridle over her neck, exclaimed, "Now, Miss, for once I have caught you;—you can't get away now."

The little lady reddened to her very forehead, stamping in pretty indignation as she struggled to get free;—crying, "Let me alone, you great boy! I hate you, you disagreeable boy, that I do!"

The boy grinned and chuckled, and kept his hold.

"Let Miss alone, can't you, Taffy?" said the housekeeper, addressing her nephew; though by no means with so much displea-

sure in her manner as the occasion seemed to demand. And then turning to Lucy, and speaking in a fawning, canting tone, she tried to reconcile her to the freedoms of the boy, by expressions to this effect.—"Don't be angry, dear Miss, don't be angry; its only Taffy's drollery. He is only at play. You know he loves you dearly. You know you used to say you would be Taffy's wife."

"Taffy's wife! Taffy's wife, indeed!" replied the little lady, in high and beautiful indignation. "If I ever said I would be Taffy's wife, it must have been before I knew what it was to be any body's wife." And she made another effort to get rid of her leather collar, at the same time extending her arms to me, and calling upon me to assist her.

I certainly am not the most proper person in the world to become a lady's champion, especially where strength of hand is required. It was, however, impossible to resist such an appeal as the present: and I therefore arose, or rather slid down from my chair, raised myself to my utmost height,

seized my little staff, and, marching up to Taffy, insisted on the immediate liberation of the lady.

"You had best let them alone, Mr. Airley," said Mrs. Nuttall; "the pretty dears like a little play: they are old friends, and love each other very much. Is it not so, Taffy?"

"Yes," replied the boy; "yes, we like each other very well: that is, when nobody meddles between us. Don't we, Miss?"

"No, indeed!" returned Lucy: "no; I don't like you at any time. I hate you: and if you will not let me go, I will scream so loud, that they shall hear me in the oak parlour."

"Do then, Miss," said the boy; "for I won't let you go, not while you threaten me."

On this, the little lady burst into tears; and Mrs. Nuttall and I both interfering, the boy at length loosed his hold, and she sprang to me, seizing my arm, and drawing me out of the room. "Come with me, Mr. Airley, come with me," she said, "I want to shew you the garden on the other side of

the house." And as she passed through the great hall with a hurried step, she looked back from time to time to observe if we were followed.

At length, being quite out of hearing from the housekeeper's room, she gave way to her displeasure, in the language indeed of a child, but in a manner which excited my astonishment more and more.

"I hate that Taffy, Sir, I do hate him," she said. "He will catch me, and play with me whenever he can; and I don't like him to play with me. And Mrs. Nuttall is not angry with him when he is rude; and she says I ought to love him because I have known him so many years."

"Why do you go into Mrs. Nuttall's room, then, Miss Lucy?" I asked.

"I never do, Sir," she replied, "when I know that Taffy is at home. I did not know that he was at home to-day."

"But why don't you tell your aunt Winifred, when this boy is rude?" I enquired.

"I have told her many times, Sir," answered the little lady.

"And does she not reprove the boy?"

"I do not know, Sir," she rejoined. "She does not take any notice when I tell her. Only once she said, 'Don't be proud, Lucy Lovel: you despise poor Taffy, because his aunt is a servant.'"

"I hope that is not really your feeling, Lucy?" I said.

The little girl looked in my face, and replied, "My aunt says it is, Sir; but I don't know. I did not think about it, till Mrs. Winifred mentioned it; but I should not love Theodore, Sir, if he were like Taffy; and Theodore is not a servant's child."

This little affair with the housekeeper and her nephew filled me with many strange and perplexing thoughts, and I deemed it right to caution the dear little orphan against familiarity with her aunt's servants; advising her not to go into the offices, and never to visit Mrs. Nuttall's room. This advice being offered and accepted, we waved the subject of Taffy and his aunt, and the sunshine was speedily restored to the features of my Lucy.

CHAPTER VII.

A SUNDAY AT ROXOBEL.

The day after my visit to the Hall was Sunday; and Mrs. Strickland's pew being very small, the ladies of the Hall did me the honour to invite me into that belonging to them; a compliment which I valued the more as it was an acknowledgment of their good opinion of the little man in the presence of the whole parish. There, being enshrined among crimson cushions and quarto Prayer-Books, and not choosing to mount upon a hassock, (for I am rather particular in matters of decorum,) I saw no one during the service but the three elder ladies and the blooming Lucy. However, I had the pleasure of hearing an excellent sermon from Dr. Beauchamp, who, I was informed, had returned to the par-

sonage the evening before, with his lady and the children.

As we made our *entrées* and our *exits* by a side-door which led from the family-pew, through a little shrubbery, into the Hall gardens, I was spared all greetings in the porch, which pleased me well, as I have a particular dislike to that gossiping which too frequently takes place in going in and out of a village church. In consequence of this uninterrupted transition from devotion to retirement, I was enabled to retain that sweet frame of mind into which the service had tended to place me, till I reached the privacy of my own apartments.

When Mrs. Strickland brought up my first dish, which she makes a point of doing every day, she took occasion to felicitate me on the compliment which the ladies had paid me, informing me that I was the first stranger who had ever been invited to the family-pew, and hinting, that I owed this preferment to a word spoken in Mrs. Judy's ears by Mr. Barnaby Semple.

"So," thought I, "there have been manœuvres, and counter-manœuvres, for

aught I know, respecting the pew the little man was to sit in at church; and my friends have carried the day, and are triumphant!"

In the evening I again went to church, and heard another sermon; but I found only Miss Lucy and her maid in the pew. After service, the little lady wished me to accompany her in a walk to the parsonage, having received permission to spend the evening there: but I thought proper to decline this tempting offer, as I had not yet received a call from Dr. Beauchamp.

After drinking tea, I set out about six o'clock to take a walk in the park.

Above all things, I love a solitary hour spent in some quiet place on a Sunday evening; and if to quiet, I can add the epithet beautiful, so much the better. I accordingly issued from my lodging, and made my way in a straight line towards the higher regions of the park. Crossing a velvet lawn, I entered a woody region, having Torville on my left hand, and the parsonage on my right, and began to ascend beneath the shade of a winding walk entirely sheltered by tufted

trees; a cool and fragrant region—a place for the sound of rushing waters, and rustling leaves. Passing on, yet continually ascending, I came out on a wide glade entirely encircled with woods, in the centre of which many deer were assembled in groups; and at the further end of the lawn, under two aged yew trees, was an old-fashioned wooden rotunda opening upon a deep dingle to the left. These ancient yew trees, extending their arms as if to embrace each other, reminded me of the story of Baucis and Philemon, as given by Dryden. They seemed so old that they appeared to have belonged to ages long forgotten. Amid the higher regions of the woods which encompassed this glade, were the nests of many rooks, who at this calm period of the evening were all in motion in their aërial city, setting things in order, as it were, against the hour of rest. I proceeded onward, musing on many things, till I had come up close to the yew trees, and to the wooden rotunda between their huge trunks; and then, making my way around it, I suddenly found myself brought in the face of a

large party seated within. I started back; but before I could make my escape, I was hailed by an infant voice, and seized by an infant hand, and was thus arrested in my intended retreat. It was Lucy who had taken possession of me.

"O, Mr. Airley, I am so glad to see you," said this affectionate little creature: "we were just talking of you, and wishing for you here. Papa, (I always call Dr. Beauchamp papa,) and Mrs. Beauchamp, and Eugenius, and Sophia, and Theodore, were all vexed because I had not brought you. But come in, and you shall see them all together."

I now found myself seized by the friendly hand of the doctor himself, drawn into the alcove, and addressed on all sides with such hearty welcomes, that I felt myself to be among old acquaintances almost before I had chosen a seat.

"Well, this is kind, most kind," said the doctor, his eyes glistening with Christian charity, and the good man never doubting but that I had come, not by accident, but on purpose to join the party. "This is setting

aside ceremony. I meant to have called on you to-morrow; but Sunday is better than Monday for our meeting. 'The better day the better deed:' and what deed so good as one which evinces our love for our fellow-creatures? Right welcome are you, dear Sir, to Roxobel. We are all prepared to love you." And then he called on the boys to offer me their hands, and drew forward his little Sophia for the same purpose.

A lovely creature indeed she is, with those soft sleepy eyes which are always so beautiful; and more especially so, when they are capable of being lighted up, and exchanging their dovelike simplicity for a more animated expression. I soon perceived, that this pretty creature was highly prepossessed in my favour; for although she did not venture to address a single word to me, yet she looked half shily, half kindly upon me, and, when brought near by her father, she stood still by my side, not seeming to desire to remove.

Mrs. Goodwill had well described Mrs. Beauchamp; one glance assured me that she is the kindest and the best of creatures;

but there is more deep study required to penetrate the characters of the two boys, who, though entirely different, are in their way each uncommonly handsome: Eugenius, whom I looked upon as the future possessor of the wide domains around me, being as elegant a boy as I ever beheld; and Theodore, on the other hand, as remarkable for the vivacity and fire of his dark eyes, and for the spirited turn of his well-defined features. On the whole, therefore, I thought that I never had seen four more promising young people than those before me; and I naturally loved them the more for the friendliness of their manner towards myself, and for the unequivocal evidences of good-will which they exhibited.

It is a law of our nature, from which the worst of men never wholly depart, to love those who love us. Hence it is found, that those teachers of religion who chiefly expatiate on the goodness and mercy of God, as displayed in his having given his only-begotten Son for our lost race, are always more successful in exciting our better feelings than those who take delight in exhibit-

ing the terrors of divine justice. Nevertheless, a perfect display of the Christian religion consists in a correct statement of all the divine attributes, and in an accurate display of the wonderful manner in which they all harmonize in the work of salvation through Christ our Saviour. But whither am I wandering? and how have I happened to glide into matters apparently so remote from my subject?

"Well, Sir," said the good doctor, after a short silence, "and how do you like my children? I see that you have been physiognomizing them. They are all very different. Nevertheless," and he smiled, and paused, "I hardly know which is the worst among them. A fine legacy, indeed, did dear Emily Lovel leave me when she passed from this life to a better, in leaving me her two good-for-nothing children; and she expected me to take these young cuckoos into my nest, yea, into my very heart. How unreasonable some people are!" And the good man's eyes filled with tears, while he held a hand to the orphan brother and sister, who both rushed to his bosom,

the little girl in the ardour of her embraces displacing his bushy grey wig. "There now," he added, looking at me, while he arranged his wig; "see what liberties these creatures take. But come, come, all to your places. Who can remind me of what we came here for?"

"To sing some hymns, papa," replied the little modest Sophia; "and for you to explain to us a chapter in the Bible."

"Well," said the doctor, "and we will have our hymns, though Mr. Airley is come. Who will lead the band?"

Each person then produced a little edition of Dr. Watts's Hymns, and there was a sort of pause till I volunteered my services.

Music has been my delight from infancy, and nature has endowed me with some voice and ear. I sung a well known simple old psalm-tune; and the young people followed me up with spirit. And when we had concluded, the doctor said, "Delightful! most delightful, Mr. Airley! You shall teach my children to sing."

"And to play, too," I replied. "Will you be my scholars, my little ladies?" I

added. "Make the little man useful, if you can, Dr. Beauchamp. Shall I be your music and drawing-master, my little people? I shall require a high salary though, in return for my labours; namely, your good-will—the friendship of all here present."

I had thought some time of making this proposal, with regard to Miss Lucy, as I had espied a neglected harpsichord in the library at the Hall; and I was glad to find, that my proposition was most joyfully received by all parties.

Other subjects suitable to the day were then introduced. A chapter was read by the young people, and some remarks were made upon it by Dr. Beauchamp; after which, we looked about on the lovely prospect which was extended before us.

"I cannot wonder at the ancient heathens," remarked Dr. Beauchamp, "for converting their woods and groves into the temples of their idols. The unconverted man, indeed, pollutes every thing with which he meddles. Nevertheless, the first idea was noble and natural: for where do we feel disposed to indulge such holy aspi-

rations, as amid scenes where the loveliest objects of creation are spread around us? And this, Sir, is my reason for bringing my children out on a Sunday evening, after the public services of the day, to study the word, and to [illegible] the praises of God, among his exquisite works."

At this moment, two crows alighted on the grass, at no great distance from our alcove. One of these most amiable specimens of the feathered race was grasping in his beak a portion of a dead horse, or some other such delicate morsel, and seemed to consider himself in a sort of dilemma; not daring to loose the savoury bit lest his companion should snap it up, and yet not knowing how to transfer it to his maw without first dropping it on the earth. No doubt he had changed his place, and had flown from tree to tree, till he was wearied with his various manœuvres, and despaired of thus delivering himself from his fellow bird, who had made up his mind, with true crow-like impudence, to have his share in the dainty. And now, both parties having alighted on the grass, we were not a little

amused with their various gestures, their struttings and flutterings to and fro, and their manifold hoppings and sidlings. The careless air of the empty-mouthed bird, on the one hand, and the looks of vigilance and defiance which were cast upon him by the bearer of the prey on the other, together with the various cawings and croakings which proceeded from their throats, were likewise extremely entertaining. At length, on the boys' bursting into a loud laugh, the birds took wing, and we saw them no more.

As soon as they were out of sight, Eugenius remarked, that he had often envied the vizier in the Arabian Tales, who understood the language of birds and beasts; and that he had no doubt that those crows understood each other's cawings, as well as he could understand the discourse of his companions.

"That vizier," I replied gravely, "was certainly to be envied; but if he understood the language of birds and beasts only, he was but partly instructed, Master Lovel: for I once knew a person who, in

some measure, understood not merely the language of birds and beasts, but also that of stars and planets, brooks and rivers, trees and herbs, rocks and hills, and of almost every production of nature."

"O, Mr. A[illegible]ey," replied Eugenius, "you are surely joking. There is no such thing as this language of which you speak, is there, Sir?"

"Yes," said Miss Lucy, looking very hard in my face, and smiling, "he is joking. I know when he jokes, and when he is serious; though his face is always most grave when he is joking. I know him very well: he is very naughty sometimes."

"Nay but, Miss Lucy, I am not joking now," I replied.

"Then what do you mean?" enquired the little girl.

"Why, my little lady," I answered, "I mean what I say."

"What! that trees, and brooks, and stars, can speak?" asked Theodore.

"I did not say that they could speak, Master Theodore," I replied; "but that they have a kind of language; or rather,

I would say, that they exhibit certain signs, or symbols, by means of which they have the faculty of communicating ideas to those whose minds are prepared to comprehend them: and this they accomplish with as much and perhaps with more accuracy, than you would find it possible to attain by the use of any words that you have it in your power to select."

"I cannot understand the subject, Sir," said Eugenius; "please to explain. Are you trying to puzzle us? Is there any trick in what you are saying?"

"I give you my word, Master Eugenius," I replied, "that there is no trick at all in what I assert; nothing but the plain truth. I repeat, that trees, brooks, hills, stars, and all the various tribes of nature, are so constituted as to convey to the minds of those who have studied their language, numerous and highly important ideas respecting things invisible."

"And you say, Sir, that you understand, that is, that you can read this language? and describe the ideas which these natural objects are intended to convey?" said the boy.

"I did not say, Master Lovel," I rejoined, "that I, or any one, was an adept in this science; far from it: but I know so much of it as to be anxious to know more. I believe, I am so far advanced, that when I am placed in the midst of a beautiful country, abounding with the wonderful works of God, I feel as if I were set down in an extensive and valuable library, with the capacity to read and be benefited; and this would not be the case, as you well know, with a ploughboy who could not put two syllables together."

"Then, Sir," said Eugenius, "you understand the letters or characters of this language? and can put them together?"

"I know some of the characters, and some of their combinations," I replied; (no one indeed has yet discovered them all;) and I can read many passages in this book of nature. I also hope, that in these lovely woods of Roxobel, I shall be able to improve myself in this science, and to attain greater knowledge and skill in the mysteries which the works of nature are qualified to explain."

"Sir," said Eugenius, changing his seat, and coming nearer to me, his fine features displaying an intellectual glory, which added incalculably to his beauty; "I don't understand you, but I shall not be satisfied till I do. Please to tell me more about these things."

"But we are keeping all the conversation to ourselves," I answered, looking at Doctor and Mrs. Beauchamp.

"Go on, go on," said the doctor; "I am all attention: go on, I beseech you. I say with Eugenius, tell us more about these things. You are arranging ideas which have haunted my imagination at times for years past."

"Sir," I replied, "my great difficulty is to make myself intelligible to these young people, though there is no deficiency of intellect on their part. But Master Lovel and I, with your permission, will take an opportunity of studying these matters alone: for which purpose we will take some solitary walks, that is, when I have fully established myself in your confidence; for I must not expect you to give me a full

letter of credit, at this early period of our acquaintance."

"I cannot but give you my confidence already," replied the doctor. "I like your countenance and your conversation. I am rejoicing in the prospect of obtaining such a friend for my children."

"Good man," I thought, "may you never be deceived!"—and I then returned to the subject of our discourse.

"I take my text, my good Sir," I said, "from the four first verses of the nineteenth Psalm; and I am thereby induced to believe, that all things visible are types or signs of things invisible; representations of realities that exist within the veil of the celestial sanctuary. I also believe, that every natural object has received the impress, as it were, of the spiritual object which it represents; and that its very being and existence is an evidence and demonstration of another being and existence which inhabits the unseen world. I also consider that every one of these types has a signification perfectly definite, though liable to be modified by circumstances; and that

all of them, viewed under their various combinations, no less than when regarded separately, are capable of suggesting certain truths to the mind, and of disclosing certain ordinances of the divine will, which might otherwise have remained undiscovered by human intellect. I likewise apprehend, that this language of types is capable of being systematically arranged, and that a kind of dictionary and grammar might be formed of it. I believe, too, that it is a science which is becoming better understood every day; and that in proportion as it becomes cultivated, the Old Testament will open its marvels to our astonished view, and reveal its glories with greater and greater magnificence."

"Give me your hand, Sir," said Dr. Beauchamp; "I felicitate myself on the acquisition of your society. We must have conversations without end on this subject. I take in the grand outline of your ideas. Where have I been till now? I have always desired to read the Creator and his attributes in his works; but I have hitherto read with dim and dazzled eyes. I now

begin to conceive, that those objects which I have heretofore viewed indistinctly, as the fairy visions of a dream, may really be arranged and reduced to order. Indeed, my good Sir, you have opened a new world to me. And so you conceive, that every natural object is so contrived by divine wisdom as to form the type and emblem of something spiritual? and that these objects, in their various combinations, and under their various modifications, may communicate such information as kings have desired to be acquainted with, and have not been permitted? You consider, that the sun, the moon, the stars, the winds, the waves, the waters, the birds of the air, and the beasts of the field, are moveable and lively types occupying the places assigned them in the book of nature by the Creator, and continually unfolding their sacred lore, in order that man may read and be wise unto salvation? Here, indeed, is food for meditation; here, indeed, is a feast for the imagination. I shall not sleep to-night, Mr. Airley; not a wink. But come, before we break up for the evening, (for Mrs.

Beauchamp is looking at her watch,) pray read us one chapter of your book; be so good as to read us the page which is open before you at this moment: you would not speedily find a fairer."

"I must first call upon you, Dr. Beauchamp," I replied, "to describe the scene as you behold it; and then for my interpretation."

"I see, before me," said Dr. Beauchamp, "and, as it were, spread at my feet, a deep dingle, opening sufficiently to bring within our view a cascade, which, tumbling from the hills above, presently loses itself in the depths of the dell. I see lofty woods rising on the further bank; the ground beneath, even to the edge of the brook, being covered with underwood and intertangled bushes. I see the long golden rays of the setting sun shooting athwart the woods, and the well-defined streams of light shedding their glories over the deep mass of shade. I see also, nearly opposite to us, the vast trunk of a tree, which has been sometime felled, and whose brown and seared bark forms a fine contrast with the many tinted

greens of the neighbouring vegetables. I finish my description with those splendid columns of violet, purple, and golden clouds, which rise on either side of the setting sun, and resemble the pillars of a glorious portal, opening upon the regions of eternal bliss."

"Very well, Sir," I said. "You have done your part; and now for mine.—I see before me, and as it were spread at my feet, a small portion of the Church of Christ withdrawn from the view of worldly men. I understand that the beneficial influences of the Holy Spirit are richly descending thereon; being conveyed through the instrumentality of yonder distinguished ecclesiastical establishment, which through its exalted station has been blessed in being rendered the resting-place of many who have been witnesses for the truth. I remark, in observing the flourishing estate of both the lowly and the elevated persons who compose the little portion of the Church now spread before me, that the Holy Spirit, thus abundantly shed among them, extends his salutary influences to every individual thereof: and that hence the con-

gregation of Christians derive their spiritual strength, and vigour, and stability. Neither can I doubt, but that the good works of such as are visited with these wholesome influences are answerable to the honourâble situation which they are permitted to occupy; each individual being enabled to bring forth his fruit in due season. I also perceive, that the Sun of Righteousness, even Christ our Saviour, sheds his glories, his spiritual warmth and light, even on this little retired congregation. And I doubt not, that though he withdraw his immediate presence, spiritual illumination will still be reflected from him through the ordinances and appointments of his Church. I am also aware, that one of the most flourishing members of this society, has been cut off by the stroke of death; but I have reason to think, that his life is not perished, and that his root will spring again; or, to speak in other words, that, in the day of the resurrection, he will awake again, and be renewed in glory. I see also, as it were, on the right hand and on the left of the Son of God,

those multitudes of glorified spirits, who have been raised from the mass of mankind to be witnesses for the truth, and to become instruments in the divine hand of dispensing new blessings, by means of their writings and testimonies, on those that still remain within the pale of the church militant on earth."

When I had finished, the doctor broke out into a sort of ecstasy. "No more to-night," he exclaimed: "I will not, my dear friend, hear another word. I have too many ideas already; I have not room for one more." And then suddenly changing his high ecstatic tone, he turned affectionately to me, gave me his hand again, and said, "Don't do me the injury to let me discover that you are not the really good man that I take you to be."

So saying, we arose; for Mrs. Beauchamp insisted that I should return with them to supper: after which, Miss Lucy and I, with a servant from the Hall, directed our steps towards our respective residences.

CHAPTER VIII.

VARIOUS EXCURSIONS.

Dated some days after the last.

EVERY thing in my rooms is now arranged to my fancy. My organ, too, is set up, and well tuned. I have improved my acquaintance at the parsonage, and have begun to instruct the young people in music and drawing. I visit the library at the Hall every day. Nobody notices me during these daily visits, excepting Miss Lucy, who spends some hours with me there every morning. I am endeavouring to give her some education: and she appears most anxious to learn. A crown to the footman, now and then, secures me every comfort. The ladies have sent to

thank me for my attentions to Lucy. I still wonder at their trusting me so much, for they know nothing about me besides what I have chosen to tell. I hope that I shall be a blessing to the little fair one. Indeed, she wants a friend near at hand; for she has hitherto received no education but what she has picked up at intervals at the parsonage.

Yesterday afternoon, I went into the park, and directed my steps towards Torville. This little estate is situated on the very brow of the hill, overlooking the Hall and all its appurtenances. In itself it is no unpleasing object, for it looks like an enchanted tower, ensconced in tangled woods. The whole of this little domain is encircled by high unclipped hedges, much out of repair; and within the hedges it is entirely filled up with woods, excepting to the north, where there is a field sufficiently large for the maintenance of two or three cows. It has the right of road through the park in several directions.

I walked under the hedge of this wild little territory, till I came to a gate of ad-

mittance. The gate was locked; but I climbed over it, and walked on through a gloomy wood for about half a quarter of a mile, when I found that I had arrived close under the tower. I could not help asking myself what business I had in this place; but though I could give no satisfactory reply to this question, curiosity still urged me on, and on I proceeded, till, as I have said, I found myself under the very walls of the building. I went round it, in order that I might inspect it the better: and for this purpose had to scramble over many briars and brambles, and got myself well stung with nettles. I also encountered a large rat, who no doubt wondered at what I could be doing there. However, I brandished my walking-stick, and looked valiantly; and the rat withdrew.

I trust, that if any one should happen to see these papers when I am no more, he will not be reminded in this place of the contest between Gulliver and a certain long-nosed quadruped which assaulted him in his bed, while he resided with the father

of his Glumdalclitch in Brobdingnag. At any rate, should the idea occur to him, let him not take credit to himself for its originality; for I not only thought first of the simile, but spoke first: and so no more of the rat; there is no credit to be got by him.

The Tower of Torville, (for so this building is called,) I found to be composed of exceedingly small bricks, nearly blackened by damp. It seemed to be three stories high, not reckoning two ranges of chambers, the windows of which jutted from the roof, like small dead eyes overhung with heavy eyelids. The lower windows had stone frames, and consisted of diminutive triangular panes of a greenish glass, many of which were deficient. The first floor projected considerably over the ground-floor. On the top of the roof was a sort of cupola, or clock-house, in a ruinous condition. The lowest windows of the house were so high from the ground that it was impossible for me to peep in; nor did any sound whatever issue from within, though various melodies seemed to proceed from some place not far off, for I heard a dog howl at in-

tervals, and poultry chuckle, and geese cackle.

Having well examined the front and one side of the house, and reflected that the country people had not transgressed the rules of poetic propriety, in placing a ghost in this gloomy residence; (for one would almost have supposed that ghosts might rise spontaneously at Torville, like funguses in a warm bog;) I turned back by the path from whence I came, and began to survey the other side of the building. At the back of the house was a wide court-yard, the enclosure being formed partly by a high wall, and partly by a multitude of outhouses, which threatened destruction to the heads of all that came under them. Among these outhouses, towered an old-fashioned pigeon-house, to which, had I seen it in France, I should certainly have attributed the privilege of bestowing a title; not having forgotten the old story of the baron, who, having sold every thing but his pigeon-house, was hence designated, "Le Baron de Tour de Tourterelles."

It seems, that the regular and obvious

door to this court of ruins, was blocked up. However, being possessed with the spirit of curiosity,—than which there is not a more troublesome nor a more active spirit in existence,—I traversed the briars on the outside of the wall, and, after a little perseverance, found a door open, and a way which led through a cowhouse, and brought me into the yard. I now had a clearer view of the mansion, which seemed larger than I had at first imagined; having two entrance-doors, with steps to ascend to them, one of which seemed as if it had not been opened for years, being, like the charity-box in Hogarth's picture, covered with a complicated drapery wrought by Arachne and her nymphs. The many outhouses, whose backs I had before seen, now gaped upon me in all directions, with their open and empty mouths; most of them being unprovided with the means of being closed. In the centre of the yard was an ordinary looking, bony, meagre, coarsely clad female, feeding a variety of poultry, geese, and ducks, which made such a clatter, that, for a moment, the barking of a large mastiff,

chained to the wall, was not heard by her. But on a cessation of noise among the feathered creatures, she heard the alarm, and turning around, beheld the intruder. She instantly threw away the remainder of her ducks' meat from the cracked plate which she held in her hand, and advanced towards me with long strides: and before she could be heard without a scream, she enquired what I had to do there.

I was half afraid of the woman, for I had never seen a worse countenance, and was for a moment at a loss what apology to make for my intrusion; on which she repeated her question, in no very civil language.

What could I do? what could I say? The amazon might have annihilated me with one blow. I was at my wit's end; yet my good genius did not forsake me. I made a profound obeisance; and, in a tone of the softest courtesy, begged to know if her ladyship could inform me, whether one Anthony Grimshaw resided in that house?

"Anthony! Anthony!" repeated the virago; "Grimshaw, indeed! Was ever

such a name heard in a Christian country? You know as well as I do, that there is no such a person here." And then lowering her tone, "I will tell you one thing, you little thief," she added, "that if you do not get out from hence, I will make you remember your visit as long as you live."

Great as my peril was, the spirit of mischief would not let me refrain from further provocation. I therefore bowed again, and begged to know if she could give me any information respecting my friend.

"Are you daft, or deaf?" replied the fury. And she seized the handle of a broom, which lay near to her, and balancing it in her hand like a quarter-staff, "Begone," she said, "and never let me see your face within these walls again."

I lost no time in retreating beyond the reach of her arm; and then, honouring her with another obeisance, I thanked her for her courtesies, and, promising her another visit, made the best of my way through the open door of the cowhouse, being followed by her good wishes, which no doubt continued to reverberate among the echoes

of the old walls long after I was out of sight.

When I got into the wood, I actually sat down to laugh: and my features were scarcely composed when I arrived at my lodgings. The same evening, Dr. Beauchamp called upon me, and I related my adventure.

"You are a bold man," said he, "to face Mrs. Jenny Rawson. That woman, I might venture to say, is the worst character in the parish; unless I except her husband Christopher, or Kit as he is usually called. And yet I know not exactly what charges could be brought against the man and his wife; although I have an indefinable horror of them. Strange it is, Mr. Airley, that we have but two freehold estates in the parish; that women are at the head of each of them; and that these women are both governed by their female servants. As to the widow Torville, she has not been seen for many years; and is, it is supposed, as entirely under the control of Jenny Rawson, as Mrs. Winifred is under that of Mrs. Nuttall. Probably Mrs. Torville

is a weak, ignorant, low-spirited person. But the influence of Mrs. Nuttall over Mrs. Winifred, is what I cannot understand; it is quite incomprehensible: and I have seen Mrs. Winifred herself wince under it like a galled horse. And then the liberties which are allowed to David Nuttall, or Taffy as they call him, are intolerable. Eugenius has not half the influence at the Hall which Master Taffy possesses. I am sorry for the boy, however. He must be ruined, inevitably. Nothing can save him, humanly speaking. However, I have not failed to speak my mind to his aunt; though I believe I gained no favour by my interference, either with the maid or the mistress. After all, Mr. Airley, we are a curious set of people at Roxobel; a very entertaining assemblage. But I should advise you not to trust your head again in the way of Mrs. Rawson, lest we should have another ghost at Torville: and one ghost in a parish is quite enough for the animadversions of the people; another would rather perplex us.

"But Torville, Mr. Airley," continued

the doctor, "is not the only black hole in the, neighbourhood. Not to speak of the housekeeper's room at the Hall, there is the Warrener's Tower, and the Gipsy Wood; and Master Tom, the warrener, is himself one of the inexplicables. Therefore, I really would not advise you to visit him; though I do not suppose that he would murder you, which is more than I dare assert of Jenny Rawson and her husband. But there is a sad nest in the quarter of the warren; and there is no touching one of the gang, because they are so strongly favoured in the seat of empire, which, you doubtless understand, is in Mrs. Nuttall's apartments."

So saying, the doctor shook my hand, and took leave.

There are some people to whom a warning against any particular thing, place, or person, always acts as a kind of attraction; and these people, I believe, compose the mass of mankind. Tell a child that he is not to touch or taste any particular thing, (even supposing him to be what is called a good child,) and he will immediately desire

to do what you forbid, and will have some difficulty in preventing himself from doing it. This is undoubtedly one of the characteristic traits of our nature; and it is one of those qualities which, with a few more which I forbear now to enumerate, makes the natural man that sweet and amiable creature which we feel and find him to be, and renders the law totally inefficacious in amending him.

Now, in accordance with the foregoing remark, Dr. Beauchamp had no sooner left me, than I began to enquire within myself, whether I was yet strong enough for a walk to the Warrener's Tower; and the result of my meditations was, that I determined to set off the very next afternoon.

Accordingly, after I had dined, I enquired the road; and being told that I must pass between the church and the parsonage, and direct my steps towards the east till the hill and the Tower rose before me, I set out and trudged away till I had left the village considerably behind. My route lay through the park, in one part

of which was a grove which promised me shade for the space of a quarter of a mile; and I had scarcely entered this sequestered path, before I was overtaken by a decent-looking female, whom I presently recognized to be Mrs. Nuttall.

The housekeeper addressed me civilly, and, indeed, as graciously as I could have expected. And when I informed her whither I was going, she offered to accompany me part of the way, saying, that she was come out purposely to settle some business in the same direction.

Mrs. Nuttall is not a person to whom I feel the smallest inclination to open my mind: I therefore allowed her to lead the conversation; and contented myself with making a remark, and putting in a question now and then.

She first apologized to me for her nephew's behaviour in my presence on a late occasion; and I ventured to observe, that, as the boy seemed to be a spirited one, I thought he would probably be better at a school further from home, and with a stricter master.

"My lady would not hear of his going to a distance!" was her reply.

"Your lady!" I said, in some surprise: "what voice can your lady have in the business?"

She caught up her words as it were, and added, "My lady is so considerate about my feelings. She knows how attached I am to the dear boy."

"Attached!" I repeated: "but surely, in a case of this kind, you would only consider his good, and not your own feelings. Besides, as his spirits are so high, it must be troublesome to you, to have him at the Hall, lest any thing should happen to displease the ladies."

"Dear lad!" she replied. "The poor fellow is very manageable. You can't think how very manageable he is, Mr. Airley."

"He is your nephew?" I rejoined;—"a brother's son, I suppose, Mrs. Nuttall?" not well knowing what more to say.

"Yes, Sir," she replied, looking as pathetically as her unmoved features would permit: "the son of a dear and only brother, now no more, who was cut off in the

flower of life. But we are all liable to death, Sir." And she sighed.

"True, Mrs. Nuttall," I rejoined, with a responsive sigh. "And this Master Taffy is the sole representative of your dear brother?"

"Yes, Sir," was her answer, "and his picture, too; though I don't say in face and feature, altogether, but in his ways, Sir. The dear boy has just his father's ways."

"Indeed, Mrs. Nuttall," I replied, "I don't wonder then at your remembering your brother with delight, if he resembled your nephew."

I forget the remainder of our discourse; an omission, which I the more regret, as our topics could not fail of being particularly agreeable, and perhaps useful, for I remember that our conversation ran for a long time upon pickled cucumbers.

At length, the old Tower arose before us in all its majesty; and Mrs. Nuttall, assuming her most insinuating manner, said, "My dear Sir, may I be so bold as to ask you what your business is at the Warrener's Tower?"

"O merely to look about me, Mrs. Nuttall," I replied, "and to make acquaintance with Mr. Thomas, the warrener."

"I wish," said Mrs. Nuttall, "that I could walk on and introduce you; but my business calls me another way, and we must presently part. But if you will please to mention my name to Mr. Thomas, you will make sure of a kind reception at the lodge."

"And no bad thing to make sure of," thought I, not forgetting what Dr. Beauchamp had said. I, however, kept my cogitations on this subject to myself.

"And which way do you think of returning, Mr. Airley?" said the duenna, after a moment's silence.

"Probably by the turnpike, Mrs. Nuttall," was my answer; "for I should like to inspect the place of that accident which has ended so happily in being the means of my introduction to so many agreeable persons at Roxobel, and, among others, to you, Mrs. Nuttall."

I accompanied the latter part of my

speech with a handsome bow, which caused the features of the duenna to relax into a sort of smile; and she said, "Upon my word, Mr. Airy, you are the politest of men."

We had now reached the boundary of the park, and saw before us a ladder with a hand-rail, intended to assist the passenger in crossing the paling. I handed Mrs. Nuttall over the enclosure; and we then exchanged compliments, and parted, I to walk on to the Warrener's Tower, and the dame to proceed towards a little village, consisting of about a dozen cottages, which appeared to the left, deeply embosomed in woods.

I soon reached the foot of the *tumulus*, or circular hill, on which the Tower stands. A clump of Scotch firs crowned the summit of the hill, in the centre of which arose the venerable edifice; and I already heard several voices proceeding from the door. The building, as it appeared between the tall shafts of the pines, seemed to be of very ancient masonry; its walls being pierced with long narrow windows, which

had been originally intended for arrow-slits. The *tumulus* was covered with short crisp grass, which rendered my ascent very difficult.

When I had penetrated through the trees, I found that I must wind round part of the Tower in order to find the door; though I was informed of the direction in which it lay by the loud voices of men who seemed to be carousing within. Must I confess, that I now felt half inclined to return without improving my acquaintance with Black Tom? Nevertheless, remembering the doctor's words, I proceeded; saying to myself, "He will not murder me: who is afraid?"

A little perseverance brought me in a direct line with the door-way. The door itself, of massive oak, studded with bosses of iron, was wide open; and I saw within a company of savage-looking men, seated at a table, where were drinking-horns, and two or three black jacks, or pitchers.

The men were in deep discourse, and I speedily distinguished Black Tom the master of the Tower; a tall stately figure, but almost lost in the abundance of his black

bushy whiskers. He wore a short shooting-jacket, a belt and pouch over his breast, and thick half-boots. He was in the midst of an oration, of which I only heard the few last words, namely, "and so, as I said, I fetched him a blow across the chops, which made the blood spout;"—when suddenly seeing me, he raised his eyebrows, and fixed his eyes upon me, looking fiercely; till, at length, his features relaxed into something more than a smile, and he exclaimed, yet not without an oath, "What have we got here? the king's fool? or Tom Thumb?"

It was not for me to put up with so gross an insult as this; it was worse than the affront which I had received at the hands of Miss Lucy, when she inserted her fairy arm within mine. I therefore looked as big as I could, drew my features into their utmost solemnity, and said, "Mr. Thomas, my name is Airley, and I come to pay my compliments to you on the part of Mrs. Nuttall."

"O Sir," said Black Tom, "I beg pardon. I know now who you are—the stranger

gentleman, who has made such a noise in Roxobel. I beg pardon. I hope no offence. I am a rough man, Sir; but I means no harm. Pray, Sir, sit down, and take a cup." And he very civilly offered me a chair.

I was quite disarmed by this rough courtesy, and said, "I am not in the least offended, Mr. Thomas. If I am short, you are tall; if I am little, you are big: these things are as Providence pleases. I am never angry at being laughed at in a friendly way; the intention, you know, is every thing: and I am sure you meant me no ill. I will therefore, if you please, take my seat beside you, though I cannot drink with you: an acorn cup of your good ale would be too much for me; so you must excuse me."

"Well, Sir," said Black Tom, "every man is to do what he likes here. You shan't be pressed to drink; but we are proud of your company, and you should be welcome, though you could drink a gallon full to the brim, instead of an acorn cup."

As I had volunteered a visit to Black Tom, I thought myself bound to be complaisant: I therefore sat down, and we fell

into conversation. We talked of the Tower, which he maintained to be as old as the Conquest; and he vaunted his cellars also, hinting to me, with a wink, that they had formerly been used for other purposes than to keep ale good in a thunderstorm. The hall in which we sat, was a vaulted or arched apartment, of great strength and height. It was hung round with deer's horns, fowling-pieces, fishing-tackle, nets, stuffed birds, and the skins of hares and rabbits. There was a wood fire, almost extinct, in the wide chimney, and several massive doors appeared in the sides of the room, opening into small closets or chambers within the wall, which last seemed to be of immense thickness. Beyond one of the door-ways, I observed a narrow stone staircase, like those that we sometimes see in the towers of churches.

"And how do you like my castle, Sir?" asked Black Tom. "I see you are looking about you. I have lived here, boy and man, these thirty years, Mr. Airley, by favour of the ladies of the Hall."

He then gave a sort of nod to his com-

panions, who were rising to go, adding, "So you're off?—good luck to you; call again when you come this way." Then turning to me, he proceeded with the subject on which he had commenced. "So, Sir, as I was saying, I am fondish like of these old stones, and would not change them for never a palace in the land, and the Hall to boot, that would not I. But I understand Mrs. Nuttall has directed you to come here? Belike you may be some sort of kin to she?"

I denied the honour assigned to me, and tried to give the conversation a more serious turn.—"And so, Mr. Thomas," I said—

"Black Tom, Sir, if you please," put in my auditor; "they call me Black Tom."

"Well, it shall be Black Tom," I replied, "when we are a little better acquainted. And so you say that you have lived in this tower thirty years. I was thinking that thirty years was no long time to look back upon, and not much more to look forward to. But when thirty and thirty are put together, it brings a man

pretty nearly to the end of his tether; and then it will not much matter whether he has lived in a tower or a dungeon, provided he has taken some thought about what is to come after this life."

"Very true, Sir, very true," replied Tom, looking seriously; "but, honoured Sir, it is my luck to live in a sort of way which does not leave me much time for serious thoughts."

"As to time, my friend," I said, "all men have time for thinking, though they may not have much for reading."

"Well then, to be plain, Mr. Airley," he replied, "I have no heart to think of these things. The sort of life I lead is so contrary to,"—and he stopped a moment, as if for a word; but directly added, "Pshaw! what am I standing at? The truth, Sir, is, that a man who lives as I do, would rather forget the next world, than encourage himself in thinking of it."

"Why so?" I said; "your calling is an honest one?"

"It is so, Sir, in itself," he answered; "but, Sir, Mr. Airley, you and I are new

acquaintance, and you are in some sort a stranger here; but if you are the man I take you to be, that is, a sort of friend to every one; a person who hears every thing, but tells nothing; (for that's the character they give of you in our village;) why then, Sir, I may be tempted to open my mind to you sometime or other. And now, Sir, I call that fair speaking, and if I was not much your inferior, I would offer you my hand upon it."

I immediately stretched out my hand to him, and he gave it a hearty grasp. After which, promising to call again, and hoping that I had already said enough to lead him to reflection, I took my leave, promising to repeat my visit at some future time.

I walked round the Tower, when I had left its hospitable master, till being arrived on the north side of the *tumulus*, I saw, in a kind of hollow, the little hamlet, whose thatched roofs I had before noticed; and near to it, a thick dark wood. I felt myself disposed to examine this village, and with that intention I descended the hill, and made my way to its entrance. The cot-

tages of which it was composed stood around a green, each house being situated within a garden, encircled by a high clipped hedge, with the exception of one tenement, which was placod somewhat in advance of the rest, and was distinguished by a sign, swinging on a beam, and exhibiting the triumphant figure of St. George fighting with a fire-breathing green dragon.

I had heard that this village, commonly called Burrow-Town, contained as many poachers as men, and as many thieves as women and children; and indeed, I never beheld a set of darker countenances than those which peeped at me over the hedges and half-doors of the cottages. However, I was permitted to pass on unmolested, till, being in a line with the Green Dragon, a short lane, terminating in the dark wood which I had seen from the summit of the *tumulus*, opened on my right. I immediately bent my steps in that direction; and as I proceeded, obtained a view of the river which forms the northern boundary of Roxobel.

I had no sooner reached the wood, than

I found myself involved in a deep shade, which was the more agreeable, on account of its contrast with the strong glare of the warren which I had just traversed. A few winding half-beaten paths then appeared, promising no very direct passage to open daylight; but the song of the blackbird, and the note of the wood-pigeon, tended greatly to enliven the place. Onward I then proceeded, till suddenly a glade opened before me, and a scene well worthy of the pencil of the artist presented itself, where the trees cast their deepest shade. In this glade was a kettle, hanging on a transverse stick, supported by two upright posts of the same rough materials; and near to it a boy, who had been probably set to watch the process of the cookery, but had fallen into a deep sleep, in a sitting attitude, his head leaning against the trunk of a tree. A little on one side of him, a donkey was standing, in a state of motionless stupidity, which I conceive to be the most perfect enjoyment of which this long-eared quadruped is capable; and at some distance behind the sleeping boy, was a sort of tent, as ragged

and various in colour as any lover of the picturesque could have desired. Long deep rays of light were streaming across the scene, and formed a beautiful contrast with the shade of the trees in the back-ground. I recollected that I had heard, that this neighbourhood was haunted by gipsies; and thus being able to account for the objects before me, I sat down on a low bank, in the best point of view I could select, and, taking out my pencil and sketch-book, I busied myself in drawing the outline of the rural scene.

Such a little man as I am is easily hidden, insomuch so that I have often been screened from observation when I really had no intention whatever of using concealment. This was my present case; for I had unpremeditatedly set myself down on the right of a thick holly bush, which would have overshadowed me from head to foot even from the eyes of Argus himself.

While I was here sketching with all my might and main, a female voice proceeded from the thicket beyond the holly bush, pronouncing these words.—" You will

not fail us, Nelly? My lady is very uneasy; and we are anxious to know who he is."

The voice was Mrs. Nuttall's; and the duenna was using her most insinuating manner.

"But, good Madam," replied another female, in a deep provincial accent, "how is I to satisfy you, unless I sees him? Hearsay won't do in matters of this kind. Besides, they tells me he changes his shapes, and looks one thing at one time, and another thing at another."

"Well, then," replied the duenna, "if you must see him, why not call at Mrs. Strickland's? Cannot you make out some business there?"

"What!" screamed the other, "to be called after for a witch and a thief? and, perhaps, to be hunted with the dogs out of the village? No, no, my lady, that won't do. And, to be plain with your majesty, I don't at all like the service. Them little folks have ten times the deepness which bigger ones have; and I had much rather you would employ another than me

in the business. And if I cannot have the bargain for the kitchen grease, why, my lady, I shall scarce know how to make it out: I fear I must leave my trade and go to work, for I canna see my little lads and lasses starving."

"Pshaw!" said Mrs. Nuttall; "did I not promise you the kitchen stuff, if you would do this service for us?"

"Then I must see the gentleman, at all events," rejoined the other; "and if he is not willing to let me look into his palm, I fear it will be beyond my art and power to tell you aught about him."

"Come, come, Nelly," replied Mrs. Nuttall, "I know you love to make difficulties where there are none. Come, here's a crown, and the promise of the grease. Are you satisfied now?"

The tone of the gipsy seemed changed when she spoke again; by which I was led to understand that she had touched the silver: and her next address was in that fawning, canting style, which indicates self-interest of the most sordid description.

"I am bound to pray for you, dear lady," she said, "and for that dear youth, Master Taffy. Bless his sweet face. It does me good to look at him, with his pretty grey eyes, and his hair as bright as the sun. Sure, he is born for great things. I know nothing of future events, if there is not a dainty little lady growing up to be his wife;—a lady of high blood, and one that is fair as a lily, with eyes so bright and blue! Master Taffy is born to marry greatly, or I have no skill, and will be content to be burned as a witch and a liar."

"If every liar were to be burned," thought I, "you would not be long before you smelt the savour of the faggot, my good woman." But, hark! Mrs. Nuttall was speaking again, and I did not dare to stir, for fear of bringing both the ladies upon me.

"And do you think that there is a chance of my dear Taffy's being settled according to my wishes, Nelly?" said the housekeeper, complacently. "Not that I expect that he is to raise himself by marriage; such an idea is far from my thoughts."

"And why?" replied the other, as if in

surprise. "Why should you doubt that the sweet youth should raise himself by wedlock, as others have done? And is there not a little lady, a sweet little lady of noble degree, ready to his hands?"

"Surely," thought I, "it is not my Lucy whom this witch is promising to Master Taffy! He shan't have her. He never shall have her." And with that, hearing a rustling in the thicket, as if the ladies were on the move, I crept from my place, darted down the first path which offered, and, as I believe, got away unseen.

CHAPTER IX.

VISIT TO ROCKSIDE, AND MEETING WITH THE GIPSY WIFE.

Dated the following day.

I WAS thinking, the next morning after my walk to the Warrener's Tower, of making a visit to my first friend in Roxobel, Mrs. Goodwill, and had looked several times at the sky, hoping that the afternoon might not prove too hot for my intended excursion,—when a little boy brought me a note from Dr. Beauchamp, begging me to accompany himself, his lady, and their family, that is to say, their four children, on an annual visit to the Hermit of the Rock; and desiring me to join the party at four o'clock precisely, in the alcove of the yew trees.

I immediately sat down, and penned my cordial acquiescence in the plan.

When I met my pretty Miss Lucy, in the library, she adverted to the doctor's scheme, and told me that she would accompany me at three, in my walk to the yew tree seat. "And we must all carry something, Sir," she added, "either to help the feast, or to give away. I have got some cakes, and some sweetmeat and fruit, from Mrs. Nuttall."

"And I, for my part, will take some little books," I added, "and I shall be at your command at the time agreed on."

I was ready according to appointment, and set out with Miss Lucy, soon after three o'clock. We were all assembled in the yew tree seat, just as the clock in the clock-house of the Hall was heard to strike four, indistinctly heard indeed, but yet perceivable to those who listened for it.

The joyful little company then marched forth, each charged with some packet or basket; and various were the lovely dingles, hill-side coppices, breezy downs, and shadowy wood-walks, which we intersected in

our path; diversifying our way with such an interchange of delightful converse, as I have seldom enjoyed. Perhaps few men ever possessed talent for conversation equal to that of Dr. Beauchamp. With the appearance of never being particularly guarded, he yet seemed perfectly free from every feeling of which man has need to be ashamed. His mind was stored with beautiful and elegant associations, to the multitude of which he seemed to be making a continual addition; gleaning from every person, and every thing, some new idea, and instantly arranging, combining, and refining his newly acquired possession, by a sort of mental process, which, like the touch of Midas, rapidly converted even the basest metal into gold; pure intellectual gold, without alloy.

I have often thought, that one of the most remarkable differences between one mind and another, consists in the ability of forming combinations and associations. One man is endowed, divinely so no doubt, with a peculiar facility of associating that which is lovely or improving, with every

thing which meets his senses. Another is astonishingly quick in remarking the hitherto unobserved resemblances by which objects apparently dissimilar may be happily classed together. And a third is unfortunately ready to connect ideas the most gross and disgusting, with every object which presents itself to his apprehension.

The first of these characters, is a refined, amiable, and lovely individual, who will hereafter be admitted into the society of angels. The second is a wit, who makes his auditors wonder, and admire, and exhibit the usual demonstrations of mirthful astonishment. And the third is a vulgar and degraded being, whose talents are suited only to the morals and the intellect of an alehouse-bench.—With this last character I have no desire to be acquainted.

Dr. Beauchamp is an eminent example of the first of these characters; and, as such, it may easily be conjectured how interested he was in my theory of the language of nature, and of its capability of being digested into a regular system. Accordingly, this day, as we walked along,

enjoying the various and beautiful scenes which environed our path, he endeavoured to make himself acquainted with some of the simplest characters of this new language, and became more and more charmed with the study as he proceeded.

Thus we discoursed, till, having crossed the higher ground, and emerged from the shade of the woods, we saw before us a rugged dingle much broken with large stones, winding away towards the north: and beyond this, rising abruptly, we perceived a bold rock, on whose shelving and mossy banks were many little thatched dwellings, standing like the nests of eagles rather than the habitations of men. The whole scene was backed by woods, and many tufts and bushes of low wild shrubs grew here and there among the houses, while a stream of pure water fell sparkling and foaming from the heights, and, hastening on its course through the bottom of the valley, presently lost itself in the river.

"There," said Dr. Beauchamp, turning round to enjoy my surprise, "are we come

here for nothing?—Is not this worth seeing?"

"This is, indeed, a new chapter in our book of nature," I replied: "here is the Rock, standing beyond the reach of the floods, and pouring forth its living waters; and there are those who, having built their houses thereon, are safe in its protection."

By this time we had descended into the glen, and having crossed the stream by a few stepping-stones, we were presently discerned from some of the cottages, when an evident stir and commotion was immediately seen to ensue; the little ones of the society being observed to gather in groups at the cottage-doors.

When arrived at the foot of the Rock, we began to ascend by steps cut in the living stone, and passed before one or two cottages, the inhabitants of which the kind pastor addressed by name, patting their little rosy-cheeked children on their heads; while I, at the suggestion of Lucy and Sophia, produced some of my small gilt penny and two-penny publications, which

the little ladies took upon themselves to distribute, pointing me out, as I could perceive from time to time, as the liberal donor.

At length we reached a garden, situated on a ledge of the Rock, very curiously laid out, and most gaudy with carnations, tulips, and ranunculuses. The cottage within this garden was certainly the most superb of any that I had seen on the Rock; being distinguished by a rude porch, and by some painted glass in the window.

"Here," said the doctor, "here is our resting-place; this is Master Peter's dwelling. Call aloud, and knock, boys; we must rouse the old man. He will not come to meet us, that is not his way: he must be courted to be civil; for he is a man of consequence. Yes;—you may look, Mr. Airley: you perhaps did not expect to find a man of consequence here; but I never could see so much difference in human beings, as to think self-importance vastly more ridiculous in one poor mortal than in another."

By this time the young gentlemen had made the old man understand that we were

come to beg permission to sit awhile and refresh ourselves in his hermitage; and he had signified his acquiescence in our request in due form, and was coming forth to perform the honours of his domain. He was a venerable old man, had apparently been singularly handsome in his day, and was dressed with the greatest attention to neatness.

Mrs. Beauchamp repeated our request, on his appearance; and compliments having passed on both sides, he led us round his house to a more retired and beautiful portion of his premises, where he introduced us to a really pretty hermitage, cut out of the rock, and tastefully adorned with shells and petrifactions. In the centre of this cavern, was a rude circular table, around which were fixed convenient seats. We there unpacked our baskets, and arranged our store of refreshments, while the old man hastened to set his kettle over the fire, that we might make tea. In the mean time I had missed my little ladies; but while I was looking for them, they appeared again, in company with Mrs. Goodwill, and the

pretty little black-eyed Ellen, Mrs. Goodwill's granddaughter.

Mrs. Goodwill and I met, as we ought to have met, namely, as old friends; and we made the excellent woman sit down, and partake with us. While the water was boiling, the doctor proposed that we should sing a hymn of praise and thanksgiving for the happiness we were enjoying, and I made no scruple to lead the song; which being concluded, Mrs. Goodwill begged for another, and would have asked for a third, I believe, if the kettle had not made its appearance. She then, with tears in her eyes, thanked us for the treat; saying, "Now, my good Mr. Airley, I trust you are quite resolved never to leave us?"

"And why should I stay with you?" I said, affecting to be saucy.

"Because we begin to love you; and we hope to join with you in many songs of praise like this on earth, and to renew them with you in heaven," replied the good woman, with the tears in her eyes.

"I often think, and feel," said Dr. Beauchamp, "that there is more real piety in

being happy, than in any other act of life."

"I do not know whether you can call being happy an act, Dr. Beauchamp," I rejoined.

"I know," answered the doctor, "that being miserable is often a voluntary act. There are people who will be miserable; and to will is an active verb: and therefore, I suppose, that to be happy may also be a voluntary act, and a Christian duty also, as often as circumstances will permit."

"But are there not some sorts of happiness which are contrary to all that is right, Dr. Beauchamp?" said his lady.

"Some sorts of pleasures are sinful, my dear," replied the doctor; "but I doubt whether these ever confer happiness for one moment. I maintain that no man can be happy without deserving it."

"Deserving it?" said Mrs. Goodwill. "Ah! who deserves happiness?"

"Who, indeed?" subjoined Mrs. Beauchamp.

"Those," replied the doctor, "who are rich in the merits of the Redeemer."

"Well come off," I remarked. "I thought you had got yourself into a scrape, my good Sir, and that the ladies had the best of the argument."

Thus we conversed, till Mr. Peter, having served all that was necessary, was made to sit down with us.

The doctor then enquired after his flowers, which were his delight. And I asked him how he spent his time in winter.

"I will answer for him," said the doctor. "Peter is a great reader; and I rejoice to say that he has lately been led to love his Bible. There was a time when he desired to have his good things on earth, and his paradise here, where flowers fade and blossoms perish. But he has better thoughts now. He is now anxious principally for that land of pure delight—

"Where everlasting spring abides,
And never withering flowers."

Peter then took us to see his flower-garden; after which, being admonished by the progress of the shades to return towards our happy homes, we set out without further delay. But we were not destined

to close the evening without an adventure, which shall be related in due course.

We had entered into the darkest part of the woods, through which we had to pass;—Mrs. Beauchamp, who was not fond of the evening air, had hastened forward with the children; and the doctor and I were in deep conversation;—when suddenly, as it were ascending out of the earth, or rising to view probably from beneath the underwood, appeared a tall gaunt female figure, in a grey cloak and clouted petticoat, with a headdress which was neither cap, bonnet, nor turban. She stood still before us, and addressed the doctor in fawning accents.

"Bless your sweet face, good Sir!" she exclaimed; "it is very long since I have seen you. I hope Madam is well, and that pretty blue-eyed Miss, your daughter! Heaven bless her! But I have been down at the parsonage to ask Madam for some of her salve, Sir, for a poor woman who is sorely scalded; and though I could have put something to the scald which would have healed it in a trice, yet nothing would

satisfy the poor creature but some of Madam's green salve. And I went to the parsonage, and Madam was out: so I came this way, hearing that the family was gone to the Rock." So saying, she dropped several courtesies.

"Well, good woman," replied the doctor, "you have nothing to do but to trudge back again, which will be all in your way home, and you will find Mrs. Beauchamp. But, Nelly, why don't I see some of you at church now and then? Do you suppose that gipsies have no souls? And, as you have no enemies but yourselves hereabouts, there is no occasion to hide and skulk as you do. For shame! leave off your idle courses; make interest with your friend, Mrs. Nuttall, for a cottage, and sit down, you and your brats, (I think you have six of them,) in a decent way, to earn your bread as rational creatures ought to do."

"I don't say, good Sir," replied the gipsy, "but that I may take your good counsel before it is long."

"And have not you said as much these last ten years, you gipsy wife?" replied

the good doctor, cheerfully. "Well, Nelly, I shall remember you and your brats in my prayers; for I am sorry for you, and for them too."

So saying, he put something into her ready hand, and we were walking on, when she again addressed him.

"Honoured Sir, I was adreamt of you last night," she said, "and you was in this very wood, and you had a mitre or some sort of crown on your head, and this very same little gentleman was with you. I knewd him again as soon as ever I clapped my eyes on him. And I only wish, my good gentleman," she added, "that you would but stand still, and let me tell you what this dream betokens: for I had it just in the peep of the morn, by the token that when I awoke I heard the cock crow; and a dream just at the dawn is sure, they say, to come true."

"Well, and it is come true, Nelly," said the doctor; "and no miracle neither, only unfortunately, or fortunately, perhaps, there is no mitre in the case."

"Well, but, good Sir, if you would but

be pleased to let me see the lines in your palm?"

"Begone, baggage," said the doctor, good-humouredly, "you shan't touch the tip of my little finger. Don't think of putting upon me with all this nonsense. Go home, woman, and mind your brats."

The gipsy then turning from the doctor to me, begged, in the most fawning accent, to see my palm.

"Most willingly, my good woman," I said; "but the light will not serve here. Let us pass on to a more open part of the wood."

"Pshaw!" said the doctor; "don't encourage the woman in her fooleries. Though I don't believe that she deceives herself by them, yet there are some in our parish who have a firm faith in her prognostics."

"Let me alone, my good Sir," I replied. "I know what I am about."

This was said in a low voice; and the doctor acquiescing, we proceeded to a point where the last rays of the evening shone full on the path.

"There now, my good woman," I said,

"here is my hand, examine the palm, and tell me what the lines forebode."

The gipsy wife pored awhile over my hand, and then said, "You have been among greater folks in your former life, my good Sir, than those you now live and keep company with?"

I nodded.

"Your lordship has had titled folks among your kin?" said the woman.

I nodded again.

"Death has been busy in your family?" was her next remark.

"In every family death is busy, at one time or another," I replied; "and therefore, it behoves us so to live, that we may not dread the visitation of death."

"You have pretensions to a great inheritance?" said the gipsy.

"I have," I replied; "to that of the kingdom of heaven."

"You have somewhere a cruel enemy," said the witch.

"I have," I answered; "my own evil heart."

The woman seemed at a loss how to

get on in this place, and had recourse to fawning.

"And was it not," she said, "on account of some dire disappointment, that you came to Roxobel? You were crossed in love by a fair lady: now weren't you, Sir?"

"Come, come," I replied, "you can make nothing of *me;* you know nothing whatever about me, but what every one else may know in Roxobel. But tell me this, have you ever heard of the little wizard, the dwarf, or cunning man, who came in the tail of the east wind across the sea?"

She started, and looked amazed.

"Well, such a man am I; and, therefore, you cannot find me out: I am beyond your art."

"Bless you, Sir!" said the gipsy; "there be no such things as wizards in the world —not in these days, any how."

"What!" I said, looking her hard in the face, "how dare you say so? No wizards? no male fortune-tellers and conjurors? Why, I tell you, that there are just as many, number for number, measure for measure, head for head, tongue

for tongue, as there are female fortune-tellers and prognosticators, in the wide world. Shew me a woman who can read the stars, and I will shew you a man who can do it better. Shew me a woman who knows the waxings and the wanings of the moon, and I will bring you a man that knows its phases, and can tell all its spots. Shew me a woman who can read the tokens of the pole-star, and I will bring you a man, to whom the barkings of the dog-star are as audible, as the death-watch in the chamber of the dying. In a word, I am ready to challenge you, to dare you, and to brave you to the utmost. Collect your female fortune-tellers, your witches, your prognosticators, your women cunning in palmistry, your studiers of the stars, whether crowned with bonnet, cap, veil, or hood, and I will undertake to match them with as many wizards, bearded or smooth-chinned, shaven or unclipped, as it may chance, and each carrying a wand or staff;"—(and I shook my little stick as I spoke;)—"and each prepared to assert the honour of his order, against all who pre-

sume to doubt their skill. Name but your place and time; by daylight, dawn, or moonlight; in shade, or sunshine; in forest, heath, or bog; above or under ground; and we will have a dance and minstrelsy; and we will feast." And I shook my stick again, with a vehemence which made the woman start back a pace or two.

"Ah! ah! ah!" exclaimed the doctor, laughing till he awakened the echoes of the woods, while the poor woman was visibly embarrassed, and even alarmed.

I however preserved my gravity, called the doctor to order, and again maintained that I was assuredly able to produce as many veritable wizards as she could real witches and true prognosticators of the other sex.

"But surely, Sir," she said, "you cannot really tell fortunes?"

"And why not?" I answered. "Why should not I be as clever as you are?"

"O, to be sure, Sir;—yes, to be sure," she answered. "But would your worship please only to prove to me that you can tell fortunes, only as it were for an example?"

"With all my heart," I said. "Stand back a step or two, and look me full in the face. What shall I tell you? how much gold you have in your bag? or what henroost was last pillaged by your gang?"

The gipsy looked at the doctor in evident alarm; and then trying to seem unconcerned, "I reckon these things are beyond your knowledge, good Sir," she said.

"Well, well," I answered; "I will be merciful, and not betray you."

The woman then took courage, and laughing, said, "Thank you, Sir, for your kindness; but those who do not know our secrets, may be trusted not to tell them."

"What!" I said, looking keenly at her,—"think you that the mysteries of your trade are hidden from me? Shall I speak?" I added; "shall I tell what I see? Who has robbed the dripping-pan? who has cut the candle-end? who has purloined the suet from the mighty baron? who has carried it to the hiding-place? Is not the vessel full? is it not running over, with fat, and grease, and oil? For whom is it destined, and for what service is the rich reward prepared,

but for her—for her who can read the lines in the palm of him whose history is inexplicable? and of him of whom nothing is known?"

I was about to add more, when the gipsy, suddenly turning from me, plunged into the bushes, and disappeared from our view.

"Well done, well done, thou man of riddles! thou wizard! thou necromancer!" exclaimed the doctor; "thou hast foiled the witch with her own weapons. But take care how thou walkest in the dark: she will set loose all her imps and hobgoblins upon thee; thou wilt be pinched till thou art black and blue."

"No, no, Sir," I replied; "she will let me alone; I don't fear her; she will meddle no more with me."

"But," added the doctor, "I must be at the bottom of this affair; this matter must be explained, unless you would have me think you a wizard in good earnest. Tell me, my good friend, how did you contrive thus to out-herod Herod?"

"You shall know it all," was my answer: and I related to the doctor the

whole history of my last night's adventure.

The doctor laughed heartily; saying, "So much for the sapient Mrs. Nuttall. And does she think that she is to obtain my Lucy for Master Taffy? What egregious folly! But this I say, Sir; we must watch over our little girl: for what, with the absurd schemes of one party, and the gross neglect of another, the little one is in a dangerous position."

Our approach to the parsonage terminated the conversation, and I returned to our end of the parish, with my pretty Lucy, under convoy of a footman from the Hall.

CHAPTER X.

AN EVENING WALK.

I HAVE as yet said but little of Eugenius and his friend Theodore, two noble lads, whose characters are well worth studying.

One day, I was proposing a general inspection of those parts of the park which I had not yet seen, and the doctor proposed that the two boys should be my companions. We accordingly set out on a fine warm evening, which was only the more desirable for being somewhat cloudy and overshadowed. The doctor had advised us to wind our way, in the first instance, through that deep and exceedingly beautiful dingle at the back of the parsonage; saying, he regretted that another engagement prevented him from accompanying us.

Never had I beheld more lovely scenes than those which opened to us every moment as we advanced. I was all rapture and ecstasy, and talked away and exclaimed like one in a delirium. In the mean time Eugenius walked by my side, while Theodore made a thousand excursions, now to the right, now to the left, till his cheeks were all in a flame.

Eugenius allowed me to exhaust a few of my ecstatic feelings without interruption, and then said, "Mr. Airley, will you tell me a little more about what we were talking of the day we first met? I have been thinking, that any person, understanding as you do the language of types, must have such pleasure in rambling in the country, as no other person can have. Perhaps you will think me very silly, Sir, but I have always had a kind of fancy, whenever I have been walking in these woods, to people every place I see with creatures of my own invention. One time it was knights and ladies, and enchanters, and little fairies dancing by moonlight, with which I in imagination filled the woods. And then it was

with birds and beasts, which could speak and reason like the creatures in Æsop's Fables. And then it was with the gods and goddesses, and wood-nymphs, and satyrs, and fauns, of the ancient Greek and Roman mythology. But I think, Sir, that if I could find those objects in these wild scenes which would discourse with me on subjects relating to history, and prophecy, and religion, I should soon forget the wild creations of my young fancy; and perhaps, then, I should become more holy minded."

"You would, at any rate, be in the way to become so, my dear boy," I answered; "because every study which leads to meditations upon the Holy Scriptures must be improving: for the Bible has a peculiar and wonderful effect in cleansing the heart. And, indeed, no study is worth much, which does not lead us, either directly or indirectly, to Scripture: and I have often thought, that a person well acquainted with the types and symbols used in the Bible, would frequently be much delighted, when studying the classical authors, to find the same types and emblems used in the same senses, and

to the same purposes, by these last. For instance: the Scriptures compare the roaring of the ocean, to a noisy and impetuous multitude; and the motion of the air, to the whisperings of a spiritual influence;—both of which similies are found in the classics. The ancient customs of many nations, also, confirm and enlarge our ideas of types and emblems; and give a new and delightful interest to the study of history."

"Sir," said Eugenius, "I hope you will be so kind as to take occasion, when you are in the library at the Hall, to talk sometimes to Lucy; and to teach her a little about these things. Poor Lucy! she is not so happy as I am, in living at Dr. Beauchamp's; and, sometimes, I almost fear, that she will not know how to keep herself out of low company."

"We must endeavour, then, to impart to her," I answered, "(the Almighty helping us,) that true humility, and dignity of mind, which will enable us to pass through the snares of life, without contracting that which is evil. If we can but succeed in giving our sweet little girl a true notion of that which

composes the real lady, we need not entertain any fears on her account: but we must look to God the Holy Spirit to assist us so to do."

"Do you love Lucy, Sir?" enquired Eugenius, turning round and fixing his fine eyes upon me.

"I do, Eugenius," I replied. "I loved her the first moment I saw her; and I will explain to you how it happened. But, in order to this, I must unfold to you a little of my history.

"I never knew my father. He died when I was quite in infancy: but my mother was spared many years to me. She was one of the excellent of the earth: such a woman as I fancy your mother to have been, Eugenius. And I had one only sister, but no brother. My sister and I were twins, and were very much alike. But those traits which are thought beautiful in a woman are seldom admired in a man. Excessive smallness and delicacy of complexion and of feature, rendered us both pretty infants: but youth being departed, I am left in insignificance, as it regards

my person, while my sister, had she lived, might still have been thought a lovely little woman.

"We lived in retirement, among some of the fairest scenes of nature. Great pains were taken with our education: and the affection which subsisted between me and my Henrietta was such as hardly can be imagined. At the age of eighteen, however, my lovely sister died; and, in three years more, I lost my mother.

"I was so situated, that I could not think of forming new connexions; and for some years, yea, many years, I was a wanderer on the face of the earth. My sadness, after a while, however, softened into a tender melancholy, which last, by degrees, assumed a brighter hue: and here I now am, a happy man, content with the present, and full of hope for the future. But if, in the gentle eye of your little sister, I thought that I again beheld the expression so admired, so loved, so lamented, of my Henrietta, you will not wonder, Eugenius, if my heart warmed towards her at the first glance: and I will confess the truth, that I

am as anxious to instruct and benefit her as if I really stood in the relation of a parent to her."

"But was your sister quite as lovely as Lucy, Sir?" said Theodore, who had drawn up to us, unobserved by me, and had been listening with an expression of feeling which did him credit. "If she were like Lucy, I do not wonder at your grief when you lost her."

"I think her so," I replied, "and that is quite the same, as far as I am concerned."

"But, Sir," continued Theodore, "do you imagine that those foolish old women at the Hall will try to make Lucy marry Taffy? I have heard that the fellow calls her his little wife."

"Absurd!" exclaimed Eugenius, with vehemence. "Can you suppose that my aunts would entertain a notion so preposterous? Be assured they have more pride than to think of such an alliance."

"I should have supposed as much," returned Theodore; "yet I wonder that Taffy meets with no reproof for speaking as he does. I understand, that this is the lan-

guage he constantly uses in the housekeeper's room."

"And pray, my good young gentleman, by what means did you become so deeply initiated in the secrets of Mrs. Nuttall's private apartment?" I enquired.

Theodore reddened, as if something was implied in my speech which derogated from his honour; and he quickly answered, "I learned what I have told you, Sir, from Taffy himself."

"How so?" I asked. "Will Master Taffy tell tales against himself?"

"He did not mean it for a tale," was Theodore's reply, "but for a boast. I met him, when he was last at home, by the Swan-Pool, when they were fishing it; and he was talking very big, and saying what he would do when he was a man. And then he said he would pick and choose among the fairest in the parish."

"Well," I said, "and what then?"

"Why, then," replied Theodore, "I asked him if he counted Miss Lovel among those from whom he meant to pick and choose; and he said to be sure he did. I asked him

if he were not afraid to speak of his young lady in such a manner: and he said he was not; and that he always called her his little wife before all the servants. And with that, I dealt him a blow, and tumbled him into the mud, leaving those who would, to pick him out. Eugenius says I did wrong, and that I ought not to have meddled with such a blackguard:—but I say I did right; and I only wish, that I had another such a chance of rolling young Nuttall in the mire."

"I must confess, Master Theodore," I answered, "that my opinion coincides with that of your friend. I think that a person who aspires to the character of a gentleman, not to speak of that of a Christian, should not meddle in such brawls as that you mention. But, pray, what did your father say on the subject?"

"Why, to be sincere, he never knew a word about the affair;" was the young gentleman's reply.

"Then, Eugenius and I might have spared our endeavours to convince you that you had done wrong," I rejoined.

"How so, Sir?" asked Theodore, blushing.

In answer to this, I said, "Master Theodore, did you ever hear the story of a certain rector, who, having invited a friend to preach for him, begged that he would give the congregation a rousing sermon on the subject of excessive drinking?

"The friend made no reply to his solicitation, but went up into the pulpit and descended again without once mentioning the besetting sin of the parish, contenting himself with what was much better, namely, a clear, luminous, and affectionate exhibition of the great work of man's salvation, as displayed in the offices of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity.

"The rector, however, when eating his beef and pudding after service, politely upbraided his friend with his neglect of the hint which he had given him.

"'Sir,' said the friend, 'I am not fond of labouring in vain. You may depend upon it, that there is not a man in your congregation who is not as much convinced of the sin of drunkenness as you and I

are. But I very much doubt whether your people are so well acquainted with those subjects which I have now set before them.'"

"I understand you, Sir," replied Theodore; "and I perceive that you understand me. You mean to say, that I know what is right, although it too often pleases me to do what is wrong." And the noble boy blushed, and looked modestly on the ground.

I shook his hand, and we became better friends than ever.

We were now arrived at a point where the path began to ascend, though still overshadowed with bushes. Onward we proceeded, and, as we advanced, the steepness was such that I was obliged to stop for breath. At length, the boys proposed that each of them should hold one end of my stick, and that I should grasp the centre, and be pulled forward by their united force. This scheme afforded us much merriment, especially when I compared myself to the tortoise between the two ducks as mentioned in the fable.

After continued exertion, we emerged from the wood, and came out upon a breezy and thymy down, whence the whole surrounding neighbourhood appeared, clothed in all the vividness of a panoramic representation, united with the clearness and truth of reality. Over this down we passed, till, coming to the northern brow of the height, we found another valley, the opposite side of which was steep and craggy, richly wooded, and presenting, on one of its boldest heights, an old farm-house, which exhibited two gable-ends of lath and plaster, and black timbered joists, frowning over a perpendicular declivity, on the very edge of which the building appeared to be constructed; although this, as I afterwards discovered, was a deception of the visual organ.

From the highest point of the precipice, nearly in a line with the house, we beheld an abundant and beautiful torrent of water, which, in its descent towards the valley, appeared to be collected into three pools, successively elevated one above another, the waters of each being divided from

those of the other by a strong natural dam rising between them: and, as Eugenius informed me, after copious rains, the waters sometimes pour over the barriers with a noise that may be heard to a great distance. The banks of these pools were closely set with trees, the hanging branches of some of which dipped their extremities in the water, and were reflected in softer colours from below.

"Stop, Mr. Airley," said Eugenius, "and listen. One of the delights of this place is to hear the murmur of many lovely sounds. And first," he added, "we must notice the voice of Echo. I will call to her, and see if she is in a humour to reply." He then elevated his voice, which was remarkably tuneful, and repeated aloud the name Sophia.

The echo reiterated, three several times, "Sophia!" the voice being heard more and more remotely.

We were silent for a moment, and then Eugenius thought proper again to call upon the solitary nymph; and she was again made to repeat the name of Sophia.

He then turned to me, glowing with delight at the success of his attempts. On which I asked, "Can your Echo say nothing but Sophia, Master Eugenius?"

"He never accustoms her to any other name," answered Theodore: "but I have a mind to teach her another lesson." So saying, he shouted aloud, and made the woods resound with the cognomen of Taffy.

Upon this, Eugenius turned away in dire resentment. "Come away, Mr. Airley," he said, "he has profaned these solitudes: he has degraded the nymph for ever. She shall never again repeat the name of Sophia."

I looked hard at Eugenius, supposing that he was affecting the indignant: but not so; he was in reality irritated, and walked a considerable distance without deigning to favour us with another word.

We now descended a little way in a line with the pools, and presently came to the second, where we saw many swans swimming majestically on the surface of the water. "That creature of all others," I

observed, "is most beautiful on water, and most awkward on shore."

"I never look at a swan," said Eugenius, recovering his temper, "without thinking of the friend of Phaëton, who fretted till he was turned into a swan."

"It seems," I remarked, "that, in old times, it was supposed to be a common effect of grief and sympathy to change people into fowls: witness the birds of Diomedes, and the fate of Alcyone. And might not this notion, strange as it may seem, have some connexion with the Scriptural figures in which birds are represented as the emblems of souls, or spirits; as in the Psalms, 'My soul is as a bird caught in the snare of a fowler?' If we are correct in this respect, we may readily understand how grief might convert men into birds, namely, by destroying their bodies, and releasing their souls. I am very fond of tracing such expressions to their sources."

"But are birds always considered to be types of incorporeal beings, Sir?" enquired Theodore.

"Always so in Scripture," I answered:

"witness the Holy Spirit, who is represented as a dove. And wings are the emblem of protection: a bird hovering over its young is the type, therefore, of a protecting spirit; a beautiful and affecting emblem, which is used by our Saviour in his pathetic address to Jerusalem."

"Sir," said Eugenius, "is not the halcyon the kingfisher?"

I replied in the affirmative. "And," I added, "as the kingfisher only appears in fine weather, the poets have called happy and fortunate seasons 'the days of the halcyon.'"

Between the second and third pool was a descent of several feet, and the valley seemed contracted on each side of the dam, but opened most beautifully beyond; the woods retreating, and the banks appearing smooth and green over the whole circumference. Where the stream parted from the pool, there was a rude bridge, on the opposite side of which, considerably elevated on the bank, stood an ancient and gloomy mansion which seemed to have been one of the contemporaries of Torville: for [illegible]

built of the same kind of small brick, and had similar small windows encased in huge stone frames.

"That was the ancient residence of my ancestors," remarked Eugenius; "and now it is left to the gamekeeper and his amiable consort, to whom we will introduce you, Mr. Airley, if agreeable."

"It is very agreeable to me to be introduced to every person in Roxobel," was my answer. So we pushed on, and crossing the bridge, were saluted with the bayings of multitudes of dogs, which seemed to resound from some inner court, accompanied with the gobblings of as many turkeys.

"This is a most delightful chorus: I wonder it does not awaken your friend Echo, young gentlemen!" I said.

"The sound would not be worse than that which awakened her just now," replied Eugenius, with returning ill humour.

"Don't remind him of my offence," said Theodore. "Though he never condescended to employ his honourable fists in knocking Master Taffy down, yet he hates him more cordially than I do."

"I don't hate him," said Eugenius.

"Then you despise him, and that is worse," returned the other. "I would rather be hated than despised."

"Hate! and despise! and are these words," I remarked, "fit to proceed from the mouths of gentlemen?—for I cannot separate the character of gentleman from that of Christian! What can this silly Taffy have done to excite such violent resentment?"

"Why," rejoined Theodore, "the boy presumes to exist, and to be very ugly and disagreeable."

"Well, he can neither help existing, nor being ugly," I answered.

"Yes, but he need not be so presuming withal," replied both the boys in a breath.

"Come, come," I said, "there is too much malevolence in all this, my good young gentlemen. Depend upon it, that the world will be wide enough for you and Master Taffy too. The situation of every man in life is appointed by Providence, and we cannot alter what God decrees, by

giving way to evil passions. Take my advice: don't speak of Taffy any more, and do him a good turn if it comes in your way; and as to the rest, let him alone."

By this time we had reached the front of the mansion, and two or three tall greyhounds were come out to look at us. We ascended the steps, and entered one of those great halls, which in old time appropriated to themselves the best part of every edifice. This apartment was hung round with fowling-pieces, powder-horns, bucks' antlers, foxes' brushes, hares' skins; and other insignia of office, denoting that the master of the house was much addicted to wood-craft. An immensely long table was stretched along the higher end of the room, and a stout short matron, of about forty, sat sewing at a smaller one placed near it. This dame was dressed in a gown besprinkled with large flowers resembling pionies, and had a very flaming riband in her cap, which suited her the less, as her face was of so bright a red that the outlines of her features were hardly to be defined except when very near her. At

the sight of her visiters, she arose, and before Eugenius could speak, "Is it you, Master Lovel?" she said, in a voice attuned to flattery. "Well, this is kind; it is so long since I have seen your precious features. And how are all the good family at the doctor's? and our ladies at the Hall? and pretty Miss Lucy? Dear little lady, I have not seen her sweet face since the audit. And Master Theodore too! How are you, Sir? and the strange gentleman, I suppose, from Mrs. Strickland's! Pray be seated, gentlemen. What will you please to have? Every thing in this house is at your service, as it ought to be, Master Lovel; for it will all be your own by and by, though Heaven forbid any thing should happen to the good ladies. Yet, as I was saying to my husband but yesterday, women, be they never so high born and bred, can't live for ever; nor men neither, for that matter. So pray be seated, gentlemen, and tell me what I shall get you?"

We all sat down, but found there was no occasion to trouble ourselves to speak. "And my daughter Esther, she is at

home," proceeded the dame; "come home for the wake up at Clifton, which was yesterday, and is to-day, and I dare say she is somewhere within call." With that she elevated her voice, and made the old roof to resound again with the name of Esther.

The young lady, it seemed, was not very distant, for she immediately appeared, arrayed in all the glory of her village finery. Her efforts at display, however, were not very successful before the present company, for she exhibited a very bad specimen of the worst boarding-school education. The little girl did not appear to be many years older than Lucy Lovel, and was, naturally, a very fine child; having a good form, a glowing complexion, and sparkling hazel eyes: nevertheless, I could not refrain from disgust at the excessive forwardness of her manner, and the worldly spirit with which she pressed the cake, which her mother had produced from some repository in the wall, on the heir of Roxobel, passing over the son of the rector, as a person of very inferior importance.

We made our visit here as short as pos-

sible, and were no sooner quite clear of the house, than Eugenius exclaimed, "So much for that paragon of vulgarity, Miss Esther Stephens!"

I did not approve of the manner in which these words were spoken, and remarked, that low breeding in a place like that which we had just quitted, was more to be expected than in a cottage, and ought not, therefore, to excite such indignation as Master Lovel had expressed.

Eugenius asked me how that could be, and I added, that the mode of life which is led by persons a little above the lowest grade, is even less calculated for the benefit of the individual, than absolute poverty; inasmuch as the situation combines, in some degree, the temptations both of high and low life, without the advantages of either. For, on the one hand, when any individual has actually attained the rank of a gentleman, he is subjected to a thousand observances, without which he cannot preserve his station in society; and, on the other hand, when a man is poor and necessitous, his very wants

compel him to a proper degree of submission: but the well-fed inferior sort of farmer, or tradesman, who feels that his purse is well lined, and that he has little need of dependence on those in whose society he mingles familiarly, is the very person most likely to render himself and his family unacceptable to his associates.

"It is a good thing, my young friends," I continued, "to know what to expect of certain persons in society. It saves us a vast deal of irritation, and relieves us from the trouble of using the words 'vulgar! commonplace! illiterate!' and so on—words which never sound well in the mouth of a gentleman, nor accord with that urbanity of character, which is inferred in the etymology of the word."

Eugenius was silent, but Theodore replied, good-naturedly, "Mr. Airley is determined to make gentlemen of us, Eugenius; and I hope he may succeed."

"I do not wish to persuade you to any thing but what is reasonable, and consistent with common sense," I rejoined. "But what is the use of crying 'prodigious! mar-

vellous! wonderful!' when we have found good manners in a court; and exclaiming 'vulgar! low! under-bred!' when we have met with ill manners in a coal-barge?"

"Very true," observed Theodore, shrugging up his shoulders; "but we should have no pleasure in visiting these queer people, if it were not to ridicule them."

"And what a sad thing it would be for young gentlemen to lose all interest in low society!" was my rejoinder.

"Mr. Airley," said Theodore, "you are armed at all points; there is no such a thing as overcoming you in argument."

"No rolling me in the mud and mire of false opinions? is that what you would say, Master Theodore? Well, I wish it may be so; but I am far from reckoning infallibility among my qualities. I must confess, however, that it would give me sincere delight, to see you, my dear boys, attain, in some measure, to that first of characters, the true gentleman."

"Do you really think so highly, Sir, of the character of a gentleman?" asked Eugenius.

"I do," I replied; "and I will endeavour to give you my reasons for so doing. [redacted] All who have since appeared in that character with any success, have been imitators of this one great prototype; while others who, desiring to be thought gentlemen, have yet not succeeded in the eyes of persons of real taste, have failed, more or less, either from a wrong conception of their model, or from having become copyists of spurious imitations.—And, in such cases we may rationally conclude, that the great original has been veiled from their view by the delusions of the world, the flesh, or the devil."

"This is a new notion to me, Sir," said Eugenius. "From the period when I was a very little child, I have certainly felt a strong desire to be a perfect gentleman. I think the fancy was first suggested to me by reading the Seven Champions of Christendom; an odd book, you will perhaps

say, Sir, to convey such an idea to the mind [redacted] little boy. Yet it did so: and after I [redacted]er [redacted], I was ardently eager [redacted] St. George; [redacted]de a kind of play of the feats [redacted]try in the woods, and Theodore personated the dragon, and was to try to devour Lucy and Sophia, whom we used to bind to the trees, while I killed him."

"And don't you remember," added Theodore, "how Lucy once got free, and ran away, and we pursued her, and then she was called to go back to the Hall, and we went with her, leaving little Sophia tied in the wood, and quite forgot her till we were at the Hall? and do you remember how you flew back again to set her free?"

"Ah!" said Eugenius, "can I ever forget that day? and how Sophia wept, and sobbed, and put her little arms round my neck, and told me of a sheep with horns which had come and looked at her;—and how I wiped her eyes with my pinafore,

and carried her home in my arms. Little lovely Sophia! You will be some time before you are acquainted with Sophia, Mr. Airley; but when you are so, you will love her as much as you love Lucy. But we have almost forgotten what we were talking about. I was saying, that the Seven Champions of Christendom first made me think about being a gentleman."

"The old romances, written in the days of chivalry, or soon afterwards, my dear Eugenius," I replied, "contain much clearer notions of the character of the true gentleman, than any which can be found in the writers before the Christian era. The knights in these books, are often described as being valiant, chaste, constant, generous, and self-denying; scorning a falsehood, and humane to the fallen foe. There are, however, generally to be found many false colours in the portraiture of the real gentleman as depicted in the ancient romances, no less than in authentic history. These false colours consist of vengeance, violence, and vain-glory; not a tincture of which qualities can I ever allow to exist

in the real Christian gentleman. Such a one can only admit of one permanent motive of action, namely, the advancement of the glory of God, and the well-being of his creatures. This motive elevates him above the petty meannesses of life, and removes from him all clamour, malice, and evil-speaking. His tastes and desires being purified by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he cannot but love and choose that which is lovely, that which is holy, and that which is of good report. Being incapable of enjoying that sort of gossipping discourse which, with the greater part of mankind, is the substitute for books, he becomes a reader, and thus, with the divine blessing, he daily rises higher and higher in the scale of intellectual beings, and becomes more fit, from year to year, for that transfer to his real home, to which he is continually looking forward through the death and merits of his beloved Saviour."

When conversing with young people, it is a rule with me, never to protract a serious subject. Here a little, and there a little,

is the law of my discourse with them: for all long discussions with such would only produce satiety and disrelish. On this subject, indeed, we may derive instruction from the playful infant, on the indulgent mother's breast, who takes a single draught of the sweet cordial prepared for him by a tender Providence, and then turns away to smile and use some little blandishment; till again recollecting himself, he takes another and another draught, and thus insensibly inhales enough of that which is to make him grow and prosper. In like manner, the instruction communicated to youth should be imbibed at intervals, seasoned with innocent play, and rendered sweet by the gentle and agreeable manner in which it is insinuated. Such instructions should be as the showers of April descending on the blossoms of an orchard, while every honeyed drop is sparkling with the reflection of a kindly sunbeam.

While we were conversing in the manner I have described, we were ascending a winding wood-walk on the verge of the height which overlooked the pools, and our

path was diversified by the various views of the waters below, as they opened and retreated from our view.

"And where," I asked, "may you now be dragging the little man?"—for the boys had grasped their stick again, and had caused me to lay hold on the centre of it.

"To a nice house and nice people," answered Theodore: "to Mr. Taylor's, of the Fall-Farm. There we shall get a hearty welcome, and some tea without flattery: for these good people don't know the difference between Theodore the poor parson's son, and Master Lovel the heir of Roxobel."

"Nonsense, Theodore!" cried Eugenius. "Who ever does make any difference between us?"

"Who?" repeated Theodore: "why Mr. Porter, the butler, with his superb periwig, Mr. Barnaby Semple with his new ring, the three elegant Misses Finchley, and Mr. Jeffry Griffith, *cum multis aliis qui nunc describere longum est.*"

At this moment I withdrew my hands from the stick, and stood with them held upon my ears. The boys stood also look-

ing anxiously at me, and enquiring what was the matter.

"Nothing," I replied. "Nothing, excepting that I felt a sudden pain in my ears."

"Take your hands away, Sir," said Theodore, laughing. "You shall not feel it any more. You shall have no more reason to complain of us."

When arrived on the brow of the hill, and quite clear of the wood, we found ourselves on the very verge of the park, the paling being just before us, and ladders being fixed to it for the purpose of passing over to the other side. Immediately beyond the enclosure, on the highest spot thereabouts, stood the farm-house, and, in the background, were many barns, ricks, stables, and other appurtenances of an opulent farm-yard.

We had no sooner crossed the stile than we perceived, standing on the steps at the kitchen-door, a figure which amused me excessively. The person was that of a female, apparently somewhat more than forty years of age, tall, and shaped from the

waist downward after the resemblance of a lizard with the point of its tail cut off, her hips being uncommonly large, and looking the more protuberant in consequence of the excessive tightness of her waist. Her dress, which was of dark blue and made very full, being somewhat shorter than that usually worn by ladies, displayed a pair of high-heeled shoes, set forth with silver buckles and old-fashioned square toes. Her stockings were delicately white. She wore a white apron and bib; and her shoulders, over which hung a muslin handkerchief, rivalled her hips in extent. Her sleeves were short, her arms thick and robust, as if made for labour, and her head and face were remarkably small, looking the more diminutive on account of the compactness of her headdress. There was a general air of cleanliness and health about this person; and when we came nearer we discerned the remains of a remarkably handsome face.

As soon as the dame beheld us, she approached to meet us, welcoming us, to use a homely expression, "at the top of her

voice;" and, without waiting for an introduction, she accosted me, as if perfectly acquainted with me, saying, "And I am glad to see you too, Sir. I have heard a deal how good you are, and I am sure we ought to be thankful that such a gentleman should think of coming among us. But walk in, my pretty masters; and you, good Sir: the kettle is boiling, and you shall have tea directly. Master Beauchamp used to love my brown bread, and so did Master Lovel. The dear rogues, how they used to enjoy it!—it did one's heart good to see them. And how is the doctor? and Madam? and the pretty little ladies? But come in, for I am sure you must be hungry."

We did not deny the charge, and were accordingly ushered into a wide old-fashioned kitchen, hung with flitches of bacon, and numerous brown paper bags, such as are often seen in farm-houses, though I never could understand the purport of them: for, to my certain knowledge, the same bag is sometimes suffered to hang in the same place, without ever being opened,

for a dozen years at least. However, I don't pretend to understand all these household mysteries.

The dame set a table for us with her own hands, and then calling to her waiting-maids, with a voice like great Tom of Oxford, one of them presently appeared, a stout awkward girl, without a gown, but wearing a sort of green bodice, and short white sleeves. "Call Robert," said Mrs. Taylor, "and you mind the dairy, and tend the calves; I will wait on the gentlefolks." She then turned to me, and apologized for her servant's dress, by saying, that the lasses were best without their gowns in the hot weather.

While Mrs. Taylor was arranging the tea-things, a fine, dark-complexioned boy, about the age of Eugenius, with a very animated countenance, entered the kitchen, smiling, and even grinning with delight, at the sight of us. I was pleased to see that my two young gentlemen rose and shook hands with him, while his mother, turning to me with exultation, said, "That's our Robert, Sir."

"And a fine fellow he is," I answered. "I hope you give him a good education?"

"To be sure we does, Sir," she replied. "He was with Mrs. Tristram till he was in coat and trowsers, and then he learned to read like a prince. And since then he has been with Mr. Pen Map; and every one knows that Mr. Pen Map is a capital scholar. Why, Sir, Mr. Pen Map writes an epitaph in rhymes every year, on Mrs. Winifred's birthday; and he pens all the verses on the grave-stones in our church-yard, barring those which the doctor indites. Moreover, Sir, he understands the stars, and has told Robert a power about them; and he can clean clocks, and set sun-dials."

"Wonderful!" I replied. "He must be a prodigious scholar!"

We never enjoyed a pleasanter meal than that which was set before us; after partaking of which, we took our leave, though not before I had told Robert, that if he would favour me with a visit, I would give him a book, having heard that he was fond of reading.

From the Fall-Farm we proceeded

across the yard, through a little field, into a shady lane, which the young gentlemen informed me ran in a direct line from the turnpike at Roxobel, over the warren, and through Burrow-Town, to the ford. We pursued this lane for some time till we came to the northern brow of the hill, where we had a full view of the river, and of some high woody eminences on the other side, and, among other objects, we descried the white steeple of a little church peeping from amid the trees.

"That church is Clifton," said Eugenius, "and Mrs. Stephens tells us that this is their wake. Dr. Beauchamp, after many efforts, has broken through the wake at Roxobel, which he very much disapproved of, as it led only to wickedness; and in revenge for this deprivation, some of our Roxobel people make a practice of frequenting Clifton wake; and the miller, whose house you will presently see, has lent a little field on the other side of the water, for the people to meet in, and he laughs heartily at the idea of having overreached the parson."

"This miller of yours must be an amiable gentleman!" I said.

"You shall see him presently," replied Eugenius, "when we come to the mill. I dare say we shall find him regaling some of his f[illegible] He was once a famous bruiser: the [illegible]called him Ben the Bruiser; but he is now called Ben Tolly, and by some people Jolly Tolly, or Jolly Ben Tolly. He is something quite different from all you have yet seen at Roxobel."

As the lane was deep and shady, the boys advised that we should turn out of it to a stile on the left, and after proceeding onwards a little while, we came in full view of the mill and the mill-stream; beyond which, a little lower down, on the northern bank of the river, we descried a field, where were booths and stalls, and a great concourse of people gathered in a circle around two boxers. All this we could discern from the eminence on which we stood.

"We shall not see the miller to-day," said Theodore, "for he will certainly be with the boxers. However, we will go

down to the mill, and we will go in and ask if they have any fish, for I heard my mother enquire for some yesterday."

We now descended the path directly leading to the mill; but just as we entered the yard in front of the house, we were overtaken by a woman, riding briskly on horseback, who passed us, and went on to the steps, of which she seemed inclined to make a sort of horseblock.

"That is the Widow Watchum," whispered Theodore. "She is a good study."

We walked on, and stood behind the horse, while the lady called out to those within, saying, "Who's at home? I hear your tongues; who's at home?"

In answer to this summons, two persons appeared, whom I instantly recognized as the miller and his wife. I knew the miller by a dustiness of dress which always distinguishes men of his calling; and likewise by the self-satisfaction and insolence of manner which was of course to be expected in the individual who had acquired the cognomen of Jolly Ben Tolly. He was, however, a handsome comely man,

and one from whom a downright blow would have been sufficient to have annihilated such a pigmy as myself. His lady was a dainty dame, bedizened in many colours, and might have passed for something tolerable, had she taken a vow of never speaking; but her voice and accent being loud and coarse, my opinion did not long remain favourable to her. We were so far behind the horse, that neither the young gentlemen nor I were at first observed by the miller or by his wife, and, in consequence, our presence was no restraint upon their discourse with the new-comer.

"Halloo! come at last?" said the miller; "better late than never. Clifton wake, and no Widow Watchum till the second day! and we were looking for you all yesterday. Some said you were dead, and others that you were buried. But what has kept you so long?"

"Why, what should it be?" was the widow's reply; "but my son Tom, an unlucky rogue, he fell out of the big pear-tree yesterday morning, and we thought him dead, and I have left him now abed, and blind

as a beetle. But I am come at last, you see; so give us your hand, for I am as stiff as a dead salmon."

The miller took the old lady in his arms, and lifting her off her horse, set her on the steps, where she stood shaking down her clothes, and exhibiting such a grotesque figure as set the boys to laugh.

She was a short thick-set woman, enveloped in what the country people call a safeguard, namely, a stuff or calamanco petticoat tied over her other habiliments. In addition to this splendid article of apparel, we discovered a small red shawl, a mob cap, and a man's beaver hat, fastened down on each side over a nut-cracker face. When the old lady had shaken herself into order, the miller accompanied her into the house; but his wife having espied us as the horse, of its own accord, moved off to some well-known hovel, addressed us with a sort of cold civility, and asked what we pleased to want.

"Have you any fish?" enquired Theodore; speaking quite as concisely as the lady had done.

"I don't know," she answered, "but I'll ask Ben; please to walk in."

"Do let us," said Theodore, whispering to me, and he led the way, while I and Eugenius followed. We passed through a kitchen into a parlour, where we were desired to take seats, amidst a throng of people, not one of whom was known to me, excepting that most erudite personage, that centaur Chiron, the preceptor of the heroes of Roxobel, known by the name of Mr. Pen Map.

In a very few glances I surveyed every article of furniture in the room. The walls were painted, or rather daubed, with gaudy-coloured flowers, in that style which we call slap-dash. They were also hung with coloured prints, glazed and in black frames, representing the whole history of the Prodigal Son, with the full-length portraits of his friends and family, attired in the costume of the present reign. The chairs were rush-bottomed, and two splendid tea-trays were displayed on the chimneypiece. In one corner of the room, was a little round table, on which were placed

jugs and glasses; and the tea-equipage was set out in an opposite angle of the appartment.

The miller hardly nodded as we entered, and we should have felt ourselves rather awkwardly situated, had we not been assisted by the polite Mr. Pen Map, who did us the honour of handing us the chairs, and was the first to address me. "Mr. Airley," he said, "we are all rejoiced to see you and these young gentlemen, at this our rural festivity. It must be pleasing to a mind like yours, Sir, to witness the innocent gaiety and simplicity of rustic life." Then growing poetical, he added,

> "Happy the swain whose simple soul
> Nor guile nor envy knows;
> Whose blameless hours in quiet roll,
> In peace and sweet repose!"

The Widow Watchum here put in a word. "I hope, Sir, as I did not dust you as I passed by on my mare," she said. "I am sure I did not think you was coming this way, or I should have held her in, though she is so hard-mouthed, that it's not always easy to do so all of a sudden."

Before I could reply, the miller offered me some ale, and did not seem pleased at my refusing it, for he immediately added, addressing Theodore, "We have had a rare season for the wake this year, Master Beauchamp, and more company than ever I see'd together in this place, anyhow; and Parson Green, of Clifton, he was down with Madam last evening, and seemed quite pleased. Why did not you bring the doctor with you? We should have been mighty glad to have seen him, and I would have given him a lift over the river in my boat, if he had been minded to see the fight." The miller grinned as he spoke, and shewed teeth as white as his own meal-bags.

This impertinent speech was not received with the same freedom with which it was delivered; for Theodore reddened, and looked so indignant, that I thought it best to speak for him, and said, "We were not aware of the wake when we set out, Mr. Tolly; but we came to ask if you had any fish to part with. As you are now engaged, however, we will take our leave,

and call another time." I then got up, and bowed out of the room, followed by the young gentlemen; to whom, when at a sufficient distance from the mill, I remarked, "We have done a foolish thing; we had no business to go into such company: and had we been insulted, we should have had no one to blame but ourselves."

"That miller is a blackguard," said the boys, with heat.

"Very probably," I replied; "but gentlemen should never meet a blackguard on his own ground. Depend upon it, when Jolly Ben comes to pay his rent at the Hall, he is a very different man from what he is when sitting in his own parlour, and with his own set."

"Well," returned Theodore, "I only wish that he had not so long a lease of the mill, for he is a real nuisance in the parish, and there are no means of touching him."

Thus closed our adventures of this day, for we walked home very quietly, being all much fatigued.

CHAPTER XI.

A NOTE OF INVITATION.

ON my arrival at home, Mrs. Strickland put a note into my hand, which contained the following words: "The Misses Finchley present their compliments to Mr. Airley, and hope to enjoy the honour of his company to tea on Tuesday evening, to meet a few select friends. The Misses Finchley trust that Mr. Airley will not be later than five o'clock."

"Whom do these ladies visit?" was my first question.

"O, every body," replied Mrs. Strickland. "The ladies from the Hall have drank tea there twice, and the doctor and his family met them both times."

"O, very well," I replied; "then I trust I shall see the doctor there to-morrow."

And as the note I had received was gilt-edged, and perfectly genteel in every respect, I mended a pen, took out my finest paper, and my largest seal, and dispatched my answer in the best possible style.

The next evening, at the appointed hour, being dressed in my newest suit, I set out to walk up the street towards Finchley Cottage. The Hall clock had struck five about five minutes before; I therefore supposed myself to be in good time, and walked leisurely up the street, thinking that I should have a very pleasant evening, not doubting, that in the word "select," used in the note, I had an assurance of meeting the families of the Hall and the parsonage. However, when coming in a direct line with Finchley Cottage, which my reader must understand to be an ordinary red brick house, standing in as ordinary a garden, I was surprised to see the head of Mrs. Nuttall protruded from one of the upper windows, and that of Mr. Jeffry Griffith, the steward, from another.

It was impossible now to retreat; but I felt excessively angry at the Misses Finch-

ley's definition of the word "select;" though, by the by, the word, as it stands separately, cannot convey a very definite idea; for a company may be selected for their disagreeablenesses as well as for their agreeablenesses, for their ill qualities as well as for their good ones.

While walking up the garden to the house, I was in twenty minds concerning the temper by which I should probably be governed during the next three hours; but having spent a little of my indignation upon the knocker of the door, I found myself better, and having followed a servant-maid up stairs, was ushered into a room where were assembled, Mrs. Nuttall and her nephew Taffy, Mr. Jeffry Griffith, Mr. Barnaby Semple, my new friend Mrs. Taylor, and my old friend Mr. Claypole, the grocer, from Beckington. With these personages were assembled the three Misses Finchley, who now shone upon my astonished gaze for the first time.

I looked about for some one to introduce me to my hostesses: but no person present appearing to be mindful of this

piece of etiquette, I came forward myself, and bowed gracefully to each of the spinsters; then turning round, I paid my compliments to Mrs. Nuttall, who, notwithstanding my polite demeanour, received my attentions with such a marked frigidity, that I felt assured she must have been made acquainted with my conversation with the gipsy wife. After these ceremonials, I ensconced myself in a corner, under the protection of Mrs. Taylor, who was in my opinion by far the most agreeable woman in the room.

I have seen numberless persons like the three Misses Finchley. When seen together, they are not alike; though, when seen separately, it is impossible to recollect which is which. I consider that the best method of describing them is by negatives. They are not young, and they are not old. They are not handsome, and they are not ugly. They are not tall, and they are not short. They are not genteel, and they are not vulgar. They are not wise, and they are not foolish. They are not stupid, and they are [illegible]ssing.

They are not talkative, and they are not silent. There is no one thing about them that fixes on the memory. I think it would be impossible to hate or to love them. No man would ever marry one of them, but for money or convenience; and for this reason, that no one could think long enough of either of the fair sisters to feel himself particularly attached to her; at least, such was the opinion I conceived on first beholding them.

As soon as I was fairly seated, a conversation which had been interrupted was resumed. Mr. Jeffry Griffith was the speaker; and he seemed to have been addressing Mr. Barnaby Semple previously to my entrance.

This Mr. Jeffry is a large, substantially built man, ill-featured, sallow, and deeply channelled with the small-pox; between forty and fifty years of age, a good dresser, and possessed of two, if not three, sets of manners, which, like the curate's coats in the old story, I shall choose to denomi[illegible] hightum, tightum, and raff." The [illegible] these sets, or suits, he puts

on whenever he is honoured with an invitation to make up a rubber with his ladies in the brown parlour, or on other equally important occasions. The second suit, designated "tightum," was that which he wore on the evening of his visit to the Misses Finchley. It is his most flashy dress; and, as I perceived, was thought to become him well by the young ladies in the present company. When he assumes this suit, he is very jocose and very complimentary, affecting much devotion to the fair sex. His third suit, namely, that which answers to the curate's third coat, denominated "raff," is what the good steward wears in his own room, in the housekeeper's apartments, and likewise in the houses of the inferior tenants. This is his favourite suit, and he has been sometimes accused of letting the other two lie by till they have become moth-eaten. For this last assertion, however, I cannot vouch, as I have never yet actually faced the worthy man in his third suit, though I have seen him in it from my window, while he was occupied, in di-

recting some workmen below in the garden.

I soon discovered, that the subject on which this gentleman had been conversing before my entrance related to the gang of gipsies on the warren; and Mr. Griffith was alluding to some story respecting them which I did not comprehend at once, and which seemed to set Mrs. Nuttall in a dreadful fidget, for she reddened, and bridled, and "looked unutterable things."

Now every person who understands the politics of Roxobel Hall is fully aware that there exists a deadly feud between Mr. Jeffry Griffith and Mrs. Nuttall; and, indeed, had I not known this before my visit, I should have perceived it on the present occasion, so obvious was the pleasure which the steward received whenever his jests appeared to provoke the duenna.

Accordingly, looking seriously at me, he said, "If I mistake not, Mr. Airley had a hand in the business. They say, Sir, that you contrived to frighten poor Nelly almost into fits the other evening. I was on horseback, just at the edge of the wood, and she

came darting out of it, looking so guilty and so conscious, that I was going to clap her into the stocks; but she muttered something about you, and told me you were a wizard."

"If I confess that I am one," I replied, "will you have me burned, Mr. Griffith?"

"Not I," replied the steward; "but I would not answer for Mrs. Nuttall." And he looked very saucily at her, winking at the same time at Mr. Semple. "She has such an objection to witchcraft, and fortune-telling, and such things as those, that I would not be a witch or wizard in her way on any account."

"But there is no such thing as real witchcraft," said Master Taffy, looking at me. "You may say what you will, Mr. Airley, and Nelly may say what she will, and my aunt too; but I'll no more believe that you are a wizard than that I can fly over the moon."

"Hold your tongue, Taffy," said Mrs. Nuttall. "If Mr. Griffith chooses to plague us with his nonsense, it is no business of

yours. Come, cousin Finchley, do let us have our tea, and afterwards a rubber of whist; and then," she added, "if Mr. Barnaby Semple will be my partner, we will take our revenge on you, Mr. Griffith."

"Then I bespeak Mr. Airley for my partner," replied Mr. Griffith, with another wink. "We shall, at least, be sure of the odd trick."

I replied, that if I accepted this challenge I feared I should shew more odd tricks than my partner would like, as I actually did not know one card from another."

This brought a host upon me.

"Why, sure, Mr. Airley!" said Mrs. Taylor.

"Surprising!" exclaimed another.

"Astonishing!" cried a third.

"Impossible!" ejaculated a fourth.

And the steward remarked, that he would never believe that Mr. Airley, being by his own confession a conjurer, could possibly be ignorant of the art of card-playing.

"Perhaps," remarked Mr. Claypole, with a patronizing air, "Mr. Airley may have some religious objection to card-playing;

and then, ladies, I am sure that you would not think of introducing cards in his presence. Dr. Beauchamp, I know, has no opinion of them."

Upon this, all eyes were turned towards me; and Miss Finchley said, "Mr. Airley, if you have the smallest objection, the cards shall not be introduced this evening."

"Madam, I thank you," I replied: "but I desire that I may place no constraint on the company. If the thing is wrong, I am sure that no one here would choose to indulge their propensities at the expence of their consciences; and, if the amusement is harmless, why should I prevent my friends from enjoying it?"

The ladies looked puzzled at this; and Mr. Barnaby Semple said, "But, seriously, Mr. Airley, do you think there is any harm in card-playing?"

"My thoughts are really of no consequence, Mr. Semple," I answered. "We have but two rules of action that I know of in matters of this kind, namely, the Scriptures, and the law of the land."

"But surely, Sir," said the steward,

"cards are never mentioned in the Holy Scriptures?"

"I never consulted the Bible with the view of making the discovery, Sir," I replied. "I will not affirm that they are mentioned by name; but, perhaps, we might find some passages which would apply to them in one way or another, either approving or condemning them; and I think it would be well, if any of these ladies have any scruples, that they should turn over the Bible, in order to satisfy themselves."

This observation was received in simplicity by most of the party; but the steward regarded me slily, and turning to the teamaking Miss Finchley, he attempted to draw the conversation into another channel; exclaiming, "How excellent your tea is, Miss Betty! where might you procure it?"

The young lady smiled, and gave a significant glance, by which our eyes were directed towards the grocer, who had on the occasion what the French call *un accés de modestie.*

"It is the very same that I send to you, Mr. Griffith," said Mr. Claypole.

"Then," rejoined the steward, "the difference must arise from the want of skill in the tea-maker. If Miss Betty could but be prevailed on to superintend my tea-table, what a happy man should I be!"

"O, Mr. Griffith!" was the lady's reply; "how droll you always are! Think of me coming over twice a day to make tea for you in your rooms!"

"And why not, Miss Betty?" said Mr. Griffith. "It would be but an act of kindness to Mr. Claypole, to give every possible advantage to his bohea."

"Bohea, Mr. Griffith!" said the vender of spiceries. "Do you not know that this is the superfine green?"

"Indeed!" said the steward, shrugging up his shoulders. "And do I always drink the best green, and not know it? See what it is to want a lady to superintend my tea-table."

Much more of this most facetious and witty conversation passed between Miss Betty and the gentleman while we sipped our tea, leading me to make the reflection, that, in every condition of life, the natu-

ral feelings of human beings are the same, varying only in the modes in which they are concealed or exhibited.

At length, the tea-equipage being removed, two card-tables were set, and Mrs. Nuttall, Miss Finchley, the steward, and Mr. Semple, sat down to whist.

A demur then ensued as to what should be the second game. Both loo and commerce were proposed; but no one would give a decisive opinion, so that the company might have remained till now complimenting each other, if Master Taffy, who had been holding his head out of the window for the last quarter of an hour, had not suddenly drawn it in, and declared his determination to play at no other game than Pope Joan.

"Well, Sir, it shall be Pope Joan," said the eldest Miss Finchley; "and my sister Betty will sit out to amuse Mr. Airley."

"By no means!" I exclaimed, in alarm: "I will be a looker on. I beg I may not deprive Miss Betty of the pleasure of playing at the round game. I will sit in the window-seat, and look about me."

This, however, was not to be allowed; and the two card-parties being made up, Miss Betty and I sat down *vis-à-vis* in the window-seat.

For some moments, neither Miss Betty nor I could have been audible, had we attempted to address each other, by reason of the clamour excited by Master Taffy, who having taken up his cards, and found something in his hand which he liked very much, cried "Halloo! tantivy! here we go!" exclamations which he repeated every time that he threw down a card; no one rebuking him but the steward, who asked him more than once if he fancied himself following the hounds.

Taffy, however, took no manner of notice of these reproofs, but continued to vociferate till he had played his good hand and had got a bad one, when a short silence ensued, during which an interesting conversation took place between me and Miss Betty, which I propose to record in the dialogue fashion, for the edification of posterity.

Miss Betty. It's a fine afternoon, Mr. Airley.

The little man, (being in an ill humour:) It is, Ma'am.

Miss Betty. You are fond of walking, Mr. Airley?

The little man, (still sulky.) Yes, Ma'am, in pleasant company.

Miss Betty. The walks hereabouts are very pretty, Sir, though too much up hill and down. And the woods, Sir!—don't you think it a pity some of them weren't cleared?

The little man, (in indignation.) The hills and the woods, Miss Betty, are the principal ornaments of Roxobel.

Miss Betty, (politely.) To be sure, Sir. Very true. And, as Mr. Claypole says, if there were but a few pretty neat modern boxes stuck here and there about the park, Roxobel would be a perfect paradise.

The little man, (in high dudgeon, but trying to conceal his displeasure.) Mr. Claypole is a man of taste, no doubt, Miss Betty.

Mr. Claypole, (from the card-table.) Who takes my name in vain, Miss Betty? I don't allow it.

The conversation now took some lively

turn between Mr. Claypole and Miss Betty, during which I severely chid myself for my rudeness and ingratitude. "These poor people are trying to oblige me," thought I, "and I am behaving like a bear; because, forsooth, they are not blessed with refined minds. Give me leave to ask you, friend Airley, whether it is not decidedly more incompatible with the spirit of Christianity to give way to bad tempers, than to be playing the fool with those little bits of painted paper? Let me have no more of your pride and ill humour in this company. Are not you ashamed of yourself, you little fool?" Thus I expostulated with myself; and, in consequence, when Miss Betty spoke to me again, I answered cheerfully, and concluded by begging that she and her sisters would honour me with their company at my lodgings, at the same time, extending my invitation to every member of the present party, and fixing a day for the occasion; by all which courtesies I somewhat reconciled the little man to himself. My invitation was accepted with eagerness; and Mr. Griffith

suggested very politely that no person would think of cards, as I was no card-player, and was provided with so many amusements in my organ, my prints, and my new publications. Thus every one was put in good humour; and if I constrained myself to be civil, it was no more than what I ought to have done.

I have often thought that certain temptations particularly attend persons of a quick discernment, who have sensitive feelings, and are admirers of excellence: and such a one I consider myself, both by nature and education. Such individuals always shrink with horror from what they conceive to be vulgar; though, perhaps, they are not so much disgusted when they meet with it in decidedly low life, being habitually prepared for such *rencontres*, and knowing that it would be absurd to expect any thing otherwise. When, however, they fall in with it among those nearer to their own rank, then comes the time of trial, and their pride taking alarm, they often yield to the same temptation as that which overcame the little man when sit-

ting in the window-seat with Miss Betty Finchley.—But to proceed from these lucubrations to attend to the company.

The eventful moment was at length arrived, in which the palm of victory was to be adjudged, at the Pope Joan table, either to Mr. Claypole or to Master Taffy; and the competitors had just agreed to divide the spoils, when the figures of Mrs. Grizzy and Mrs. Judy Helmsley appeared walking up the street, followed by two footmen, each carrying a small fat lap-dog.

The ladies were dressed in stiff silks, their trains being drawn up behind like the festoons of a curtain, each having on a black lace cloak which hardly reached to her ruffled elbows, and having her head enveloped in a large calash of fawn-coloured silk somewhat resembling the tilt of a London waggon. The figures of both these venerable sisters were altogether as far from the line of beauty as can possibly be conceived, being composed of two squares, the lesser set upon the larger, and both surmounted by a monstrous oval.

"Dear me!" cried Miss Betty, "how far the ladies have come this evening! Sure they don't mean to call?" But while she spoke, they passed the gate.

"Which of the ladies are they, Betty?" asked Miss Finchley, who was dealing again for another turn at Pope Joan. Before an answer could be returned, Taffy had his head out of the window, exclaiming, as he drew it in, "O! it's only the two pugs and their mistresses!"

"Hold your tongue, Taffy: how dare you?" said Mrs. Nuttall.

"I'll tell you what, young master," remarked the steward, colouring, "you will not rest till you get yourself fairly turned out of the Hall."

Taffy gave the steward an insolent look, and then setting himself to the Pope Joan table, took up his cards; but finding he had a bad hand, he threw them down again, saying, he would play no more; after which, the amiable youth protruded his head out of the window between me and Miss Betty, exclaiming, "Why, aunt, if they are not gone in at the park gate at the end of the

street! and the two pugs have found their four legs, and are waddling along by their mistresses! They'll be sure to keep their beds all day to-morrow, and you'll have some chicken broth to order for them, aunt Nuttall."

No one replied to this sally, but the whist party looked black as thunder.

"Sir," said Taffy, addressing Mr. Barnable Semple, as if resolved to make him speak, "don't you never prescribe for Mrs. Judy's lap-dog? I am sure you do now, if you would but speak the truth."

"I shall prescribe for you presently, Master Taffy," returned Mr. Semple, reddening with indignation.

"And I trust it will be a good horsewhipping," added the steward.

"And who is to apply the prescription?" said Mr. Claypole, softly, and as if half afraid that he might be going too far. No one however answered him.

Taffy's head was now again protruded from the window, and as speedily drawn in, with a call upon his aunt: "Aunt Pen, I say, Aunt Pen, if there is not Mrs. Wi-

nifred in her pony chair, coming down from the park, and little Miss with her; and if I don't have a ride home, I am mistaken."

"Hold your tongue, can't you," said Mrs. Nuttall, sternly.

"There now," said the boy, looking out of the window, "there she comes through the gates. Where's my hat? If I don't have a ride, you shall see." And out of the room he flew, banging the door after him; and the next minute we saw him at the garden gate.

The card-tables were instantly abandoned, and every one rushed to the two windows, while the angry duenna vociferated to this effect: "Come back, Taffy, come back this moment, or I will make you remember it as long as you live."

The boy did not pay the smallest attention to the outcries of his aunt; but the head of the pony appearing at that instant, from behind the wall of a neighbouring cottage, the company withdrew a little from the windows, though not so far as that we could not see and hear what passed. Mrs.

Nuttall was the only one who sat down, and I perceived that she turned quite yellow with vexation, biting her lips till the blood almost started.

"Stop, stop," cried Taffy to the man who was driving the pony carriage, "let me get up behind. I want to ride home. Stop; do you hear?"

Mr. Griffith muttered something between his teeth, and then again listened.

The driver was proceeding, when Mrs. Winifred spoke from the carriage: "Do you hear, Joseph? why don't you stop?"

The man obeyed, the horse was stopped, and Taffy sprang up behind, and was driven off in high style, waving his hand triumphantly to the party in the windows.

"Well," said the steward, returning to his place at the table, "I will never say that I am surprised again. If Master Lovel had done as much as this, he would have heard of it for twelve months to come, and there would have been, 'Young people never know how to keep their distance,' and 'It was not so, sister Grizzy, in our time;'—and I don't know what else. But

women are simpletons, and that's the plain truth."

"Come, come, Mr. Griffith," said Mr. Barnaby Semple, directing the steward's eye to Mrs. Nuttall; "'tis but boys' play."

"Pshaw!" replied the steward, "I am not blaming the young fool; it is the old one that——"

Here Mr. Semple raised his voice, saying, "Come, Mr. Jeffry, come, come; look at your cards; mind your play; don't chafe yourself with what does not belong to you."

"I beg, Mr. Semple," said Mrs. Nuttall, "that you will not prevent Mr. Griffith from speaking his mind, out of compliment to me. I no more approve of Taffy's behaviour than Mr. Griffith himself does. The boy has taken a great liberty, and if my lady does not choose to resent it, as she ought to do, out of the regard she has for me, it must be my business to use the correction which is necessary." So saying, she pursed up her mouth, drew her person into an erect form, took up her cards, asked what was trumps, and begged that the company

might be no more disturbed by the vagaries of her nephew; thus intimating, that the subject was to be no further alluded to at that time. Accordingly, the rest of the evening passed off heavily enough, because we were all occupied in thinking upon one subject, while we were constrained to converse upon another. However, I accomplished a happy retreat, by taking my leave at an early hour.

The next morning, I was in the library at the Hall, with little Lucy, when she said, "Mr. Airley, you can't think how Mrs. Nuttall has been quarrelling to-day with my aunt Winifred!"

"*Quarrelling* with her!" I said; "what, the maid quarrelling with the mistress? that is turning the world upside down, indeed!"

"I was in my aunt's room," continued Miss Lucy, "where I went to shew my sampler, and I was standing in the window to unpick a stitch in the parrot's tail, for I have worked a parrot in my sampler, and in came Mrs. Nuttall, with my aunt's chocolate, which she took to her

bedside; and I suppose Mrs. Nuttall did not see me, for she scolded my aunt so about Taffy, you never heard any thing like it, Sir: and my aunt said she would never do so again."

"Well, my dear," I replied, "I don't think that when you happen to hear things by accident, in this sort of way, you ought to repeat them, at least not to every one."

The little girl looked at me for a moment, as if considering the meaning of what I had said, and then replied with vivacity, and unchanged good humour, "O very well, Sir, then I won't do it again."

Upon reflection, however, I thought it right to add, "If any thing which you happen to hear, may have respect to yourself, my dear little girl, you may tell me, because I am your tutor now. Your aunts have allowed me to instruct you; and should you meet with any difficulty, I would endeavour to give you my very best advice. But I don't want to be made acquainted with any secrets of the family, which have no reference to yourself; and I wish to know such as really concern you, only that

I may have the opportunity of counselling and directing you."

I could not quite ascertain whether the little girl understood the distinction which I had made; but I was pleased to observe, that her sweet face expressed the greatest attention, without the exhibition of even the shadow of a cloud on her serene and open brow.

The little story related by Lucy increased my astonishment respecting the licence allowed to Taffy at Helmsley Hall. However, as it was no business of mine, I resolved to keep my cogitations to myself.

CHAPTER XII.

THE VILLAGE SCHOOL.

I TOOK a walk this evening to the school, and arrived there about four o'clock. I first went into Mrs. Tristram's school-room, where I found the excellent woman, sitting with her young pupils around her, all busily engaged with their needles. The little creatures were dressed more decently than might have been expected, considering the condition of many of their parents. They all rose up as I entered, and I made as low a bow to them as I would have made to a drawing-room of court beauties, for I consider that females are always respectable when neat, modest, and found in their duty. "And now, my good Mrs. Tristram," I said, "sit down, and let me also have a chair; don't let me disturb work."

"Sir," answered Mrs. Tristram, "we always spend our last hour in the evening in reading a story; I am generally the reader; then we have a prayer; after which every body goes home. This is what we call our happy hour."

Upon this, the little ones all looked up, as if to say, "Yes, indeed, it is our happy hour, Sir."

I then declared the object of my visit.— "Mrs. Tristram," I said, "I have just received such a treasure from London."

"Indeed, Sir!" replied Mrs. Tristram.

"Yes," I answered; "a box of books; little books, with gilt covers and pictures."

"Really, Sir!" said Mrs. Tristram, smiling.

"Yes, I assure you; and I have a great mind to come here some afternoon and drink tea with you, and then we will open the box; and I intend to give a book to every little girl who desires to be enabled to behave better this year than she behaved during the last. Or shall I make presents only to those little girls who have been good during the last year?"

"In that case, Sir," said one of the elder girls, archly, "you would not be much the poorer for your gifts."

"And why?" I asked.

"Because there is none good, no, not one," she answered.

"Very true," I replied; "you have been properly taught, I see. And what happy children you are, in being thus led in the holy way so early in life! Well, my little people," I added, "I am come to live among you. Perhaps I may stay many years, till you are all grown up; and I hope to come often to see you, and to watch you from year to year as you grow bigger. And how pleasant it will be to me to see you all become holy and industrious women! Then, when all the little ones who now play about in the fields of Roxobel, are become men and women;—if not before, my time will come to be laid in this quiet churchyard, there to lie till the morning of the resurrection. And then, if in this life I have loved my Saviour, and have been assisted by the grace of the Holy Spirit to do the will of my heavenly Father,

I shall rise in glory, and be taken to dwell with God in everlasting happiness. I shall then be looking again for you, my dear children: and with what pleasure shall we meet in the heavenly regions, never to be parted any more!" I added a few other observations to the same purpose, and then fixing the next Tuesday, the tenth of August, for my visit, that day being Lucy's birth-day, I was rising to take leave, when one of the little girls, though apparently half afraid, pressed a little forward, as if desirous of attracting my particular notice. It was Ellen, my dear Mrs. Goodwill's granddaughter. I immediately recollected her, extended my hand to her, and asked after her grandmother.

Then walking out of the house, though not till I had invited the old lady and little Margery to my feast, I proceeded to the boys' school, which I did not find in that calm and comfortable state in which I had found the little girls. These poor boys I found to be very deficient in religious instruction; indeed, Dr. Beauchamp had informed me that this was what I

might expect: I therefore resolved to watch particularly over them; to lend them suitable books; and, if their master would permit, to read to them for an hour, two or three times a week. I almost anticipated a refusal from Mr. Pen Map; but having propitiated the pedagogue, by presenting him with a case of mathematical instruments, which I had purposely brought in my pocket, I found my way quite smooth, nor did I encounter any difficulty with the boys, who, I perceived, had already acquired a sort of liking for me, though some of the young rogues were making game at me from behind the forms and desks.

"Poor little fellows," I thought, "how unapprehensive are ye of the troubles which await you in after-life! How easy is it now to set you a chuckling and capering!" It is one of my opinions, however, that giggling children are by no means so much to be suspected as the graver and more demure sort; and that so long as their laughter is foolish and not wicked, there is little harm to be dreaded. I believe, it is a remarkable trait in the character of some

nations, that they are seldom excited to mirth, but by something grossly sinful: but I am happy to think that this is not, in general, the English character; and though commonly accounted a grave nation, I believe that we laugh more than any other people in the known world.

Robert Taylor was the only boy in the school with whom I had been previously acquainted; and I was pleased to see him come forward before his schoolfellows to claim the privilege of being known to me. He had already called upon me several times; and I had given him one or two books. We were, therefore, tried friends, and I was sure of his good word at least; and in order to make a sudden attack on the hearts of the other boys, I made the same proposal to them as I had made to the young ladies, begging a half-holiday on the next Tuesday evening. I also promised to appear with a box; which box, however, I did not intend to fill with books, as I had some doubts whether the taste for literature had as yet developed itself so far in the academy of Mr. Pen

Map, as to render books, however gilt, or however adorned with cuts, precisely the most acceptable presents that I could bestow.

Having paid both these visits, I returned home, and set myself the next morning to prepare all things for my gala. My first step was to secure the presence of my little sunbeam, my Lucy dear; and then that of the beloved family at the parsonage. I then sent to my friend Mr. Claypole, to entreat his co-operations, and to beg him to buy up all the tops, balls, pen, and clasp knives in the little town of Beckington; also to send me a sufficient modicum of tea and sugar to regale fifty persons, with some enormous cakes, and other articles specified: and Mr. Claypole was actually so astonished and puzzled with this order, that he hired a gig, and appeared himself on the eventful morning, in the front of Mrs. Strickland's door, saying, that if agreeable to me, he would take his dinner with his friends the Misses Finchley, and assist (to use a figure of speech of our neighbours across the channel) at the af-

ternoon merry-making. This was certainly giving too much eclat and publicity to my little treat: but, as I have often considered, people must have their amusements of some sort or other. And certain it is, that those who busy themselves in cutting off the hydra heads of human absurdity, often find, that, where one branch has been lopped off, a dozen more will sprout out in its place. Activity, or rather restlessness, is one of the properties of our nature; hence, a kind Providence has ordained, that man, in most conditions of life, shall either earn his maintenance, or preserve that maintenance, already earned, by the sweat of his brow. But human beings cannot always be at work. The busiest man must sometimes play; and to find harmless amusements for him, when so inclined, is perhaps one of the most difficult tasks of persons in places of authority.

I should, however, have been better pleased had my little gala gone off in the quiet way I had intended: but it was not to be. Before noon, on that important day, I had a dozen messages at least, all im-

porting that the utmost notoriety was to be given to my tea-drinking.

Mr. Claypole's gig had, as I should have thought, scarcely reached Finchley Cottage, before a message was brought from the Misses Finchley, offering their services to infuse bohea at the school in the afternoon. It was impossible to say "No," though I groaned at the apprehension of a second *tête-à-tête* with Miss Betty.

The next message came from Mrs. Taylor, accompanied with a huge pot of cream, and her best respects, and imported that she would be down with some fresh butter and pikelets a little after three in the afternoon.

Mrs. Strickland brought in the pot of cream, and delivered the message.

"Give my best respects to Mrs. Taylor," I answered, "and assure her that I shall be most happy in her company. But, my good Mrs. Strickland," I added, "where am I to put all these good people?"

"O, Sir!" replied Mrs. Strickland, "we can sit out at the door."

"*We?*" I repeated: "why, surely, *you* are not to be present?"

She dropped a courtesy, and replied, with a smile, "To be sure, Sir, you won't refuse to admit me? Mrs. Goodwill is coming to dinner, that she may go along with me."

"Well, be it so," I answered. "If it must, it must."

Returning a moment afterwards to the door of my room, Mrs. Strickland met me, saying, "If you please, Sir, Mr. Barnaby Semple has sent his servant-girl, to ask if she can be of use this evening at the school."

"Give my compliments," I replied, "and —— But you had better say 'Yes' at once to every one; and give yourself no further trouble to come up the stairs." And I therewith sat down in a sort of sulky humour, which, however, evaporated, after I had exclaimed once or twice "Pshaw!" and "Pish!" for then, like the child who, having been naughty, called out, after a while, "The good feel is come now, papa!" I felt in a better temper, and began to laugh at myself, and at all the good peo-

ple around me, exclaiming, though alone, "Well, and what harm? Where is the sin in creatures who are made to associate, liking to meet on a fine afternoon in a lovely country place, to eat bread-and-butter, and see a number of poor children made happy?"

My dinner was on the table punctually to the moment, and Mrs. Strickland herself, dressed in a gown which I had given her, and in a very showy riband, came to clear away, apologizing for her intrusion, by saying that the girl was gone to the school with the cream. "And look, Sir," she exclaimed, peering out of the window, as she passed round the table to gather up the dishes, "the folks are beginning to come!"

I rose, and went to the window, and "sure enough," (to use a phrase of Mrs. Strickland's,) there were people seen in all directions crossing the park in threes and fours, and every party, as they approached, turning towards the schoolhouse.

"Run to the the baker's!" I exclaimed, "and buy all the bread in the shop! we shall not have a crumb for each!"

"Why, Sir," replied the good woman, "they only come to look on."

"What!" I cried: "and am I to send away all those poor mothers who are leading their babes across the park, without any refreshment? I would rather go without a new coat for the next dozen years."

"Well, Sir," said Mrs. Strickland, "you need not be uneasy; for, besides all that you have provided, the girl says, (for she has been twice down at the school already,) that Mrs. Taylor has sent pikelets and butter enough for forty people."

At this instant, the blooming Lucy came dancing into the room, too happy to pay any compliments, and, with her, my excellent Mrs. Goodwill, and little Ellen; Miss Lucy's attendant not being far behind.

Lucy sprang to the window-seat, and calling Ellen to get up by her on a chair, she cried, "Here we can see them all. There are two of the Miss Finchleys, and Mr. Barnaby Semple; and there is Miss Betty, and Mr. Claypole!" And she perfectly shrieked in ecstasy, a thing not uncommon with the little damsel.

In the mean time, it was far from the little lady of the Hall to have discovered that Ellen was not altogether her equal in rank. Lucy is not so well provided with various assortments of manners, as that important personage Mr. Jeffry Griffith: for she has but one suit, though that is always fair and fresh, and tinted with the dyes of heaven.

"Look at that little angel," said Mrs. Goodwill, addressing me, in a low voice; "see how kind she is to my Ellen. And yet she never lowers herself; she is the lady in all she does. O may she ever preserve that sweet simplicity, and true dignity of character! She will be a blessing, then, to all with whom she may ever dwell."

"O, Mr. Airley," exclaimed Lucy, "there are Sophia, and Eugenius, and Theodore, running down the park, and Dr. and Mrs. Beauchamp are behind. We must go; we shall be wanted. The clock has struck three this half-hour. Come, Mr. Airley; come, Ellen!"—And there was no possibility of delaying another moment.

And now the plot thickened. Lucy had

seized my arm, repeating, "*We* shall be wanted, Mr. Airley; make haste." By the by, Lucy, on all interesting occasions, uses the first person plural. At present she has the sweet and delightful habit, in its utmost perfection, of sympathizing so completely in the feelings of others, as almost, as it were, to forget herself. May she ever retain this rare and excellent quality!

I was drawn forward by the smiling little cherub to the nearest path into the park, where I was saluted by half a dozen groups from the Rockside Hamlet, all decked in their best, and each decorated with a gaudy posy in his breast. But where were their credentials? Not one in a dozen of them had received an invitation. The eclat seemed such, however, that I certainly expected every minute to hear the bells strike up; but, fortunately, nobody had thought of this.

A most joyful greeting took place between the little lady of the Hall and Sophia, at some little distance from the churchyard-gate; and the doctor, extending his hand to me, with an arch look,

stroking his chin at the same time, exclaimed, "Who would have thought of the quiet Mr. Airley making such an uproar? But we good people at Roxobel do love a bustle. Well, and be it so. I like to see them happy. Poor souls, they have not many such gala days as this. Don't grudge it them, Mr. Airley, though it is at your expence."

"That I am sure I do not," I replied, "if there is but sufficient bread and butter."

"Don't let that trouble you," said the good-natured Mrs. Beauchamp. "I have prepared a basket of eatables, which will be here immediately; for when I saw the people pouring over the park, I began to fear that you might be taken by surprise. But only look at them," she added, smilingly: "both the school areas are full, and the churchyard is swarming!"

"Honest souls," said the rector, "much good may it do them! Don't think me an old fool, Mr. Airley; but I am as well pleased as the youngest among them."

We were now arrived in full view of the

two schoolhouses, which resembled bee-hives in the swarming season. The crowd, indeed, was so thick, that I could not distinctly recognize any other persons but my old friend Mr. Claypole, who was bustling in all directions, as if to arrange some important ceremonial; and my new acquaintance, the Widow Watchum, which last personage had entered the churchyard by some back-road, and having just dismounted, was shaking herself into order upon a high tombstone.

The appearance of this extraordinary figure was too much for me; and I yielded to a sudden and incontrollable fit of laughter, which caused the doctor to stand still to look at me.

"What can you be laughing at?" he said, in his good-humoured manner. "When you have been used to us a little longer, you will cease to be diverted with our odd ways. We are, no doubt, a set of originals, a combination of marked characters; but, nevertheless, I do not allow of my people being made sport of."

"But if I am not to laugh, Dr. Beau-

champ," I replied, "I should not have seen that worthy dame who has just dismounted, and stands on the tombstone."

The doctor turned in the direction to which I pointed, and then exclaimed, "Ah, my old friend, the lady of the side-saddle and the safeguard! I am glad she is come; the festivity would not have been complete without her. The Widow Watchum, my good Mr. Airley, is one of our most celebrated characters; she has attended every merry-making and funeral in the country for these last forty years, and has supplied us with three weddings, *in propriâ personâ*. She scents a crowd at ten miles distance, as readily as the vultures discriminate a field of battle; though I believe, I may add, that the creature is quite harmless."

We were now approaching the gates of the schoolhouse, that is to say, Dr. and Mrs. Beauchamp and myself, the rest of the party having gone forward: and on *my* appearance, I say *my* appearance, there was a mighty stir among the people, and a whisper, like the murmuring of the wind amid rustling branches, ran along the areas,

to this effect:—"It's Mr. Airley; Mr. Airley himself; Mr. Airley is come;" and, at the same instant, Mr. Claypole brushed through the crowd, presented his hand, and led *me* to a place of honour, in the centre of a line of chairs, arranged in front of the houses.

"But may I not go in?" I asked.

"No, Sir, if you please, Sir," was Mr. Claypole's answer. "Please to remain here a little, till I bring up the doctor and his lady."

"What's to be done now?" thought I; "but, however, things shall take their course, and I will endeavour to conjugate the verb *Je m'amuse*, in the present tense, indicative mood."

The doctor was shaking hands in all directions, and would infallibly have lost himself in the crowd, had he not been rescued by Mr. Claypole, and led to a chair on *my* left-hand, Mrs. Beauchamp being seated on *my* right, and all the second-hand nobility of Roxobel being arranged on seats, conveniently placed on either side of *me*. In every place where I have occa-

sion to employ this tender little monosyllable *me*, I take care to honour it with expressive italics, for *me* or *I* was, this evening, the pivot on which every important circumstance appeared to turn, and I assure you that I felt perfectly sensible of *my* increased consequence.

The doctor being at length seated, Mr. Claypole was again in motion, pushing back the *ignobile vulgus*, the plebeian mob, which consisted chiefly of decent cottagers, with their children and red-armed servant-maids; together with some saucy inferior servants from the Hall.

"What is to be done next, I wonder?" said I to the doctor.

The doctor looked archly, stroked his chin again, and seemed hardly able to overcome a disposition to laugh, which had seized him with some violence.

In the mean time, Miss Betty leaned across Mrs. Beauchamp, and said, "We are much obliged to you indeed, Mr. Airley, for this delightful gala. I am sure, Sir, you are the greatest possible benefit to the parish."

I bowed and replied; "Ma'am, dear Miss Betsy—no obligation—great pleasure—superior satisfaction—rural felicity;" adding sundry other expressive fragments of sentences, which were exceedingly well received. Indeed, it is a rule with me, when returning a lady's compliments, to reject all parts of speech excepting nouns, with which last I supply myself liberally, filling up what might be thought wanting to complete my meaning, with smiles, bows, shrugs, exaltations of the eyebrows, and other significant gestures. It was during my residence in the French court, some years past, that I learned the value of this mode of communication. Among its numerous advantages, in the first place, it pleases the fair sex, conveying many agreeable ideas to the mind of the auditress, for which she is disposed to feel suitably grateful. Having also little or no meaning, at the same time that it flatters the lady, it leaves the gentleman free as the wind. And I may likewise add, that substantives and adjectives, however lavishly used, can never implicate the honour of

the speaker; for no speech which wants the verb can ever be misinterpreted into an offer of marriage: and therefore I would particularly recommend this cautious mode of expression to those unfortunate young men who, being possessed of superior attractions, find themselves liable to be seized upon and appropriated by every unmarried young lady of their acquaintance.

But I am forgetting my newly acquired dignity, and must look back to see where I am. I am seated in the front of the schoolhouse, on the chair used by Mr. Pen Map for his desk, which is, in consequence, somewhat more elevated than ordinary ones; the doctor is placed on one side of me, and his lady on the other. The moment is critical: Mr. Claypole, having arranged the company, and formed a handsome arena between the nobility and the plebeians, is seen darting down its centre, breaking through the crowd, and again bursting forth to view, leading the redoubtable Mr. Pen Map clad in his very best.

"What now?" said I to the doctor. But

the doctor did not dare to trust his voice in reply, though he shook as if he had been troubled with the palsy.

Mr. Pen Map then advanced; and Mr. Claypole retired, and was lost in the crowd. The schoolmaster stood still in the centre of the area. His eye fell on *me*. I was directly before him. He bowed; I returned the compliment. He extended one foot; he raised one hand; and, in a loud and impassioned tone, uttered the following lines.

"Daughter of Jove, inspire my pen,
And teach my humble quill to sing
The virtues of this first of men.
Divine Apollo, too, your tribute bring.

"Britain's glory, Britain's friend,
The pride and grace of Roxobel!
Bend down the clouds, ye muses, and descend,
The praise of Airley in loud shouts to tell!

"Arise, ye wood-nymphs, and ye satyrs, too!
To celebrate our Airley's praise.
In sympathy sublime, ye waters, flow,
To add your tribute to our simple lays.

"Long may the friendly stranger still be spar'd
Our lovely valleys to delight,
Till the bright scenes for faithful men reserv'd
Shall open all their glories to his sight."

While the schoolmaster was repeating these lines, I had lived an hour, if time may be calculated by the succession of ideas and feelings. At first I had been amazingly inclined to laugh at the extraordinary manner and peculiar figure of the orator, together with the happy idea of teaching a quill to sing; and this inclination had been violently irritated by the agonies of the poor doctor, whose mirth was combating most vehemently with his good-nature, making him tremble and shake from head to foot. Then, at the sound of my own name, thus introduced among wood-nymphs and satyrs, I felt thoroughly mortified and ashamed. And, finally, I was so completely softened by the kind feelings expressed in the last verse, that I rose up, shook the poor schoolmaster by the hand, and thanked him aloud for his very friendly wishes so kindly expressed towards me.

The poor man was quite satisfied with this public acknowledgment of his merits; and, when I turned from him, I was instantly rewarded for the force that I had

put upon my feelings, by a look from Dr. Beauchamp, whose eyes were filled with tears, while his expressive features displayed approbation in every lineament. Neither did the good man fail to tell me, when next we were alone, that I had risen higher in his affections than I had ever done before, by the constraint which I had put upon my feelings in getting up to thank Mr. Pen Map for his panegyric, whereby he had only escaped the danger of making us both truly ridiculous through the excessive simplicity of the audience.

Mr. Map's superlative eulogy being concluded, the quality walked into the schoolrooms, where I was much pleased to find a very profuse assortment of all that is desirable for constituting what is technically called "*tea*" a hearty, substantial, and delicious meal: and in addition to all other refreshments, I observed a quantity of fine fruit, which I was informed was a present from the Hall.

I made up my mind to take my seat with the little damsels, having Miss Lucy on one side of me, and Miss Sophia on the

other; and I likewise requested Mrs. Beauchamp to take her station in the boys' school, with the two young gentlemen on either side of her. I soon found that *my* table was voted the genteel one, and, accordingly, I was honoured by the presence of the three Misses Finchley, Mr. Barnaby Semple, and some others of the most distinguished characters in Roxobel. Mrs. Tristram and Mrs. Goodwill sat opposite to me, at the bottom of the table, and between them Mrs. Tristram's poor old mother, displaying a new riband, and the shawl that I had given her, which she had resolutely determined to exhibit on this momentous occasion, in despite of the heat of the apartment. As to the children, we had not room for many of them; but they were seated out of doors in groups, along with their parents, while Mr. Claypole flew from place to place, together with some of the elder boys and girls, to administer the good things which had been provided.— With regard to the doctor, I cannot positively say whether he ever took a seat; for I perceived him almost continually in

motion, walking in at one door and out at another, and bestowing a word of kindness on every one, not excepting the Widow Watchum, whom he handed in style to our table, and seated, all smirking and simpering as she was, between Mrs. Taylor and Mrs. Strickland.

While we were arranging ourselves, there was such a clatter, and such an uproar, that no conversation could take place. Indeed we were a very noisy party throughout the whole evening. Mr. Barnaby Semple however made himself very agreeable between the two elder Misses Finchley, and Miss Betty contrived to insinuate some pretty compliments to *me*, on the very fine eulogium pronounced on me by Mr. Pen Map, which she asserted to contain not a word of praise more than I merited.

I ventured to ask wherefore Mrs. Nuttall had not honoured the meeting with her presence; on which Miss Betty replied, that she was sure the worthy lady would be much hurt at not being present, when made acquainted with the brilliancy of the assembly.

After tea, when most of us had taken as much as we conveniently could, (though, by the by, the quantity of adulation which I had swallowed, had somewhat injured my appetite,) we proceeded to display and divide the contents of the boxes, my little ladies and gentlemen being employed to distribute the presents; and, after this important business was accomplished, the doctor having proposed that we should first sing a hymn, we prepared to separate.

The hymn was led by *me*, all the company having crowded in and about our room; and I was so judiciously and powerfully supported by several voices in the company, especially by that of Mr. Claypole, that the harmony was very pleasing, and very affecting; and every one also must have felt that the few words addressed to us by the doctor, at the moment of separation, were very delightful.

"My friends," he said, "let us pray that we may be so led to a sweet and lasting communion with the blessed Saviour, that all who have now sung the praises of redeeming love together in this

place, may meet to unite in the same song, more melodiously sung, more divinely attuned, in that land which is very far off."

Thus concluded this interesting and happy day.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DESCENT INTO ORDINARY LIFE.

I AM now withdrawn into ordinary life; and though I am no longer the hero of the day, yet, I am quite as well contented as ever with my residence at Roxobel, and with my dear friends in this delightful place.

I have now begun to discharge the business of my days according to a settled plan, intending to retain determinate occupations for every hour. I rise at six, and when Mrs. Strickland hears the first note of my organ, at seven, she comes, with her husband and their maid-servant, into my sitting-room; and I sing a hymn, and read, and pray, taking care not to detain the good people more than a quarter of an hour. Being thus attuned for the duties

of the day, we part to follow our particular employments. I then make my tea, set my feet upon the fender, for the cold season is now coming on, and read and sip by turns. Sometimes I am thus engaged for more than an hour, and this I call my Bible reading hour, and I generally reckon it among my happiest hours.

Immediately after breakfast, I sit down to write or settle my accounts, and remain thus occupied till ten. I then put on my hat, and walk to the Hall.

Richard, the footman, the same boy, (for he is very young,) who tied the weathercock, as mentioned before, always opens the door for me at the first summons from the bell, and then I duly enquire after the health of the ladies, and am ushered into the library. By the by, the ladies have requested me to look over the books, according to an old catalogue, which was handed to me by the steward; and, with the help of Richard, I have dusted and set them in order: and I am now preparing a new catalogue, bound in red leather, and arranged alphabetically, to be kept on the

library table. And since this last great work has been in hand, Mrs. Winifred has requested that no one will take down a book without my permission, and without having his name entered in a kind of day-book; the doctor himself, who is the chief borrower, being obliged to submit to this restriction.

"I am astonished," said he, when informed of this new rule, "how the ladies can trust you with their books?"

"Why so, Sir?" I asked.

"Because," said he, "you have acknowledged yourself to be a wizard; and why may not you fly away with the library and books all together, as the enchanter did with Don Quixote's Romances, and his book-closet to boot?"

"Or rather," I replied, "as the crafty priest pretended, when he himself was in fact the thief."

"Very fair," said the doctor; "but I do owe you a grudge nevertheless."

"And wherefore?" I asked.

"Why, I am jealous of every man who enjoys the privilege of turning over so fine

a library as this. Such a privilege possessed by another, excites all that is bad in my nature."

But I am wandering from my subject. I was describing my manner of spending my day, and have unfortunately forgotten where my putsuits have led me. O! into the library. Well, suppose me arrived, and the world to be shut out for at least three hours. And first, I stir the fire, and fix the position of my table. I then arrange my pencils, and crayons, and drawing-materials, which I have brought into this room. At this time I am engaged in taking various views of Roxobel, meaning to make a present of my collection, when complete, to Mrs. Winifred, as some return for her kindness towards me. I am scarcely settled at my table, with my drawing-apparatus before me, when the door is quietly opened, and my Lucy enters. Lucy always reads to me while I draw. I am instructing her in French and English grammar, and in some other branches of polite education. I then make it her business to draw and practise music, while I read. She is an amiable

and apt little scholar. Twice in the week, my academy is augmented by the presence of Sophia, Eugenius, and Theodore. Mrs. Winifred has honoured us with a visit several times, and has always expressed herself as being truly obliged by the pains I seem to be taking with the young people. As to the other two Mrs. Helmsleys, I have never yet seen them at all on these my daily visits to the library.

At one o'clock, I take my leave of my sweet little Lucy, though seldom without the prospect of meeting her in the evening at the parsonage.

When I return to my house, I have about half-an-hour before my dinner is ready. This is usually a very pleasant interval, a season of rest, in which I allow myself a more amusing book than in any other part of the day; and I generally continue my reading while at dinner.

At three o'clock I again leave home.

Three times a week I visit the schools, giving one day to the little females, and two to the boys, with which last I am gaining such ground that I shall venture,

when I make my next annual presents, to give them books instead of tops, and whips, and knives.

I never spend more than an hour with the children at each visit; and the rest of my evenings, till the usual time for drinking tea arrives, I spend in walking, sometimes alone, and without any particular object, excepting occasionally that of increasing my number of sketches; and sometimes for the express purpose of making a call at some poor cottage or farm; my walks not unfrequently terminating at the parsonage, where, at Mrs. Beauchamp's tea-table, I have already enjoyed some of the sweetest hours of my life. And here I have often met my little Lucy again; and here I have improved my acquaintance with that most delicate and lovely young creature, Sophia Beauchamp. And how delightful is it to me on these occasions, to be permitted to instruct these charming young people in such branches of education as come not precisely within the reach of the doctor! The little Sophia brings her drawings to me with such a smiling and

modest grace, and looks so happy when I am able to praise her diligence; and Theodore is so ardent, and Eugenius so highly gifted, that it is indeed a most delightful privilege to be permitted to instruct them.

O! how these lovely children have already wound themselves around my heart! And there are others too, in lower life, who are already dear, inexpressibly dear to me, in this sweet place.

O, lovely Roxobel! here I am resolved to remain! here do I hope to live, and here to die! The life I now lead is that for which I long have sighed, and which I have at length found where I sought it not.

Yesterday I had an affecting conversation with Dr. Beauchamp. I was coming out of the schoolhouse, when, observing a number of persons in the churchyard, and the doctor among them without his hat, I was aware that they were committing some poor corpse to its last cold bed. Crossing the churchyard, and taking my place among the crowd, I perceived that it was the funeral of some very poor person, although

this by no means appeared from the manner in which the pastor performed the affecting duty.

Who can hear these solemn words, "ashes to ashes, and dust to dust," without feeling the importance of this awful truth, that one day or another the same doom must be pronounced over his own remains? Yet as at this time I stood over the grave, many pleasant thoughts arose in my mind, and mingled themselves with my more melancholy reflections. Among other things, I remembered a story which I had heard some time before, respecting the owner of a certain portion of territory in the New World. Having caused a field, hitherto uncultivated, to be broken up and planted with fruit trees, he waited several years in expectation of obtaining a rich reward for his labours. The soil, however, did not appear to agree with these trees, for they produced no fruit, notwithstanding all the skill and pains bestowed upon them, and were, therefore, condemned to the usual fate of barren trees, namely, to be cut down, and to have their roots grubbed up.

The land being thus cleared, the owner was awaiting the proper season to plant another orchard, to which he trusted that the soil would prove more congenial than to the former one, when, behold, to his great amazement, there appeared among the sods multitudes of tender shoots, which soon bursting into life, produced thousands of healthy and beautiful young plants, little known in that province, or for hundreds of miles around, and these scarcely waited maturity before they broke forth into blossoms promising fruit in the rarest and richest abundance. Now this fair forest was no new creation, neither had the birds of the air conveyed the germs from some distant region: it was merely an old orchard regenerated, whose fruitful boughs had probably flourished and drunk of the rain of heaven, in years, and perhaps in ages, long gone by. And thus the roots, or germs, which had been reposing in the earth in a hopeless condition,—while new generations were blooming and flourishing in the place where they had formerly afforded their shadows, their fragrance, and

their fruits,—now arose again to new life, new vigour, and a fresher verdure.

"And so," thought I, "so will it be with many who have been slumbering in this churchyard, in the sure and certain hope of a blessed resurrection: they will rise again, to bloom for ever in the gardens of the celestial paradise, fulfilling the words of the prophet, 'Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out her dead.'"

While I meditated on this subject, the ceremony was concluded, and Dr. Beauchamp then addressed a few affectionate words to the people gathered round him.

"We have now, my friends," said he, "committed to the dust one of the most worthy members of our little community, poor Mary Field. I have been acquainted with her habits and character for the last twenty years, and I never knew her make a determined departure from her course of humble and retired duties. Notwithstanding that she drew a painful lot in life, had a weak

and foolish husband, was exceedingly poor, and was deprived of all her children by an hereditary disease which carried them off one by one in the bloom of youth; yet this poor creature bore all her afflictions without a complaint, and often consoled herself, yea, rejoiced, yea, triumphed, in the delightful assurance that all her dear ones, even her poor childish husband, had departed in the faith of Jesus, and in the hope of everlasting happiness. To add to her trials in her latter days, she was left alone till within a few weeks of her death, struggling under the pressure of heavy corporal sufferings in a solitary cottage. Yet she never complained; and when, at length, she received assistance from her richer friends, she accepted it not as her right, but as a free and undeserved favour. Indeed, she possessed a truly humble and thankful spirit, one which this world cannot appreciate, because it is not of this world. But she is now gone where she will find herself at home with spirits like her own. And my dear friends, my children," continued the affectionate pastor, "permit

me to ask you, what does it now signify to our departed sister, whether her dwelling on this earth was a cottage or a palace, a royal city or a straw-built shed? Yet O! of what amazing, of what infinite importance is it to her, whether she was enabled to live as a Christian, to enjoy communion with her Saviour, and to die in the faith! No human tongue can find words to express the change which has already passed on the soul of this departed one, nor is human language adequate to describe the joy with which she is at this moment crowned. You will perceive, my friends, that I have no doubt of her eternally blessed condition:—and it is my earnest prayer, that I may never be called to commit any one to the dust, in this or in any other place, on whose behalf I may not be able to entertain the same blessed and joyful assurances. And now farewell, poor corpse," said the speaker, looking towards the grave; "we shall meet again, I trust, in a happier world. I only wish I had been able to shew thee more kindness in thy lifetime."

So saying, the good man turned away, the tear trembling in his eyes, motioning to me at the same time to follow him.

This tender father and pastor then walked into the church, and I found him in the chancel standing before a square tomb encompassed with a railing.

The church at Roxobel is a fine old Gothic building, and is kept in the most perfect repair. The chancel is filled with monuments, the oldest of which belong to the ancient family of Torville, and the more modern to those of Helmsley and Lovel.

Dr. Beauchamp shewed me the mutilated figure of the Knight Templar with a sort of triumph, assuring me, that he would not see a further injury done to it for a thousand pounds. He then pointed out the white marble tablet which recorded the names of Edmund and Emily Lovel; and then leading me back to the body of the church, he paused, and directed my attention to another tablet, on which were inscribed these words: *"Sacred to the memory of Mitissa, the beloved wife of*

George Beauchamp, who departed this life, August, 17," &c. Underneath were these lines.—

"Thine was the holiest form of female worth;
The gentlest grace of virtue which the mind
Of moralizing poet ever drew;
Drew from his fancy—seldom found on earth.
But once on earth the model might he find,
Prepare his tints again, and paint from you."

"That," said Dr. Beauchamp, with some agitation in his voice, "was the mother of my children. She was a little, delicate woman, and her spirits were always subject to some degree of depression from the influence of an exceedingly feeble constitution. But, in certain particulars, I never saw, and never shall see, her equal. Her whole life was one continued act of self-denial. Even the progress of disease could not divert her from one object, namely, the promotion of the good of her fellow-creatures. Her piety was warm, her charity extensive; her conversation not only as pure, but as luminous and as brilliant, as the rays of light glancing athwart yon archway. I would have taken her opinion,

Mr. Airley, before that of any human being on the face of the earth. If there be any good in me, any piety, any prudence, I owe it, under God, entirely to my Mitissa. Indeed, Mr. Airley, I have been most blessed in matrimony. To my first beloved wife, I owe all that is consistent in my character, whatever that may be; and to my second, all my present happiness. I therefore consider these dear companions of my life, as the best earthly gifts of God; and I trust that I am grateful for his abundant kindness, though I never can be sufficiently so.

"But come, Mr. Airley," continued the doctor, "are you otherwise engaged? or can you give me a few hours? Let us leave this place. There are some trains of thought which mortals cannot pursue for any great length of time; and hence the ignorance of those who would wish to prolong the offices of praise and prayer for many hours. Our Saviour knew us better when he reproved the Pharisees on account of their 'long prayers;' and so did the inspired apostle, who enjoins us to

'pray without ceasing;' in which last injunction I understand to be implied those frequent ascensions of the pious soul towards a reconciled God, which resemble the speaking glances of the infant eye towards the mother's face; those dovelike glances by which so many tender feelings of dependence and affection are expressed."

The good doctor and I by this time had left the church, and were directing our steps towards the woodier regions of the park.

"Here are some quiet nooks," said Dr. Beauchamp, "some cool and solitary spots, which as yet have remained undetected by you, and to which I shall have great pleasure in introducing you. These woods are not less lovely now," he proceeded, "because they have assumed their autumn dress: for they resemble the human countenance in advanced age, when enlightened by an improved intellect, and beaming with Christian charity, which is often much more interesting in my eyes than the countenance of youth. Every season of life, however, and every period

of the year, has its peculiar charms and its particular pleasures; and I greatly mistake, (all other things being equal,) whether the decline of life is not more serene and calm, nay, on the whole, more happy, than the days of youth.

"I am going," he added, "to shew you what was the habitation of the poor creature whose remains I have just now committed to the dust. You have heard me say, over her grave, that few persons had ever drawn a harder lot in life; and yet I will venture to assert, that during the last five years, in which I have known more of her than ever I before knew, she has been one of the happiest of human beings. She had done with the world; she had lost all the ties that bound her to it; her entire trust was placed in her Saviour; and while awaiting her change, she was almost ready to welcome every infirmity which seemed to promise her speedy dissolution. In the mean time, she was so filled with love and gratitude, and with every benign and holy feeling, that her soul was kept in a continual glow,

and every word that she uttered was a blessing. Now, tell me, Mr. Airley, could a woman of such feelings have been unhappy?"

"But why," I asked, "was I not introduced to this excellent person?"

"Because," said the doctor, "she has been bedridden ever since you came to Roxobel; and another reason is this, that I almost fear to overdrive the willing horse. You are so profuse, my friend, in your charities, that, to be plain with you, you are almost the last man of whom I would ask a shilling."

"Make yourself easy at once on that head, dear Sir," I replied; "for I assure you, that I have such a horror of pecuniary difficulties, that, if I could not be affluent in a parlour, I would live in a kitchen. Of all cares, the sordid cares attending money are what I most dread."

"I have the same feeling," answered the doctor; "and will now, without reluctance, apply to you in need. But come on now, I have promised you a new scene; advance

now to the edge of this height, and look down."

I did as I was desired, and saw at my feet a deep and narrow valley, shaded with thick copses, at the bottom of which ran a pure stream, which glistened here and there from amid the alders that overshadowed it. The softest sounds of rustling leaves, together with the notes of such birds as haunt the deepest solitudes, added infinite charms to this romantic scene.

"Look and admire," said Dr. Beauchamp, turning to me, "and meditate these lovely lines:—

'When rising Cynthia sheds her silver dews,
And the cool evening breeze the meads renews;
Here linnets fill the woods with tuneful sound,
And hollow shores the halcyon's voice resound.'

"But just advance to this ledge, and you will see further into the glen," added the doctor. "Do you not perceive, close by the side of the brook, under the shade of that impending cliff, a little hovel, thatched, and with one window in the thatch? In that shadowy and solitary

place, and all alone, for many years, lived the poor creature now in bliss. Conceive, if you can, the change which must have taken place at the moment when the glories of another world first burst upon a being who had been confined for years amid this dark and lonely scenery. Lovely as the scene undoubtedly is, there is a gloom shed over it, which faith alone could penetrate and animate. Nevertheless, as I before said, the poor creature who dwelt here alone, and in penury, was one of the happiest persons that I ever knew; and, as she often told me, she would not have changed her condition for that of the greatest queen on earth. Her infirmities had long prevented her from attending public worship; but I visited her several times a week, and the rest of my family as frequently, so that she was seldom a whole day without seeing some of us, and we always found her spinning, and singing hymns, or reading her Bible. She had made acquaintance, she said, with every tree and every bird within the glen, and was so completely withdrawn from the busy

concerns of the world, that it was become painful to her even to hear them spoken of."

"I have often considered," I replied, "that it must be one of the most painful circumstances attending poverty, when the mind of an individual has passed through any refining process, whether intellectual or spiritual, to be still condemned to the society of gross and vulgar persons."

"There," said the doctor, "you have touched upon what has always seemed to me to be the real evil of a descent into an inferior rank in life. The evil does not appear to consist in living in a kitchen instead of a parlour, or in drinking tea out of delf instead of china; but in being obliged to associate with coarse and disagreeable companions, and to see human nature continually in its least amiable form. For, after all which moralists and philosophers may have said, good manners are a very decent and becoming garb, and very useful in default of a better."

We were now descending into the glen, where every step brought us into a deeper

and still deeper shade. The fallen leaves were moist under our feet, and there was a chilly dampness in the air; for it is only in the burning heat of summer that the air of these deep glens is pleasant.

We were approaching the cottage, when the voices of young persons met our ears, and we immediately saw Eugenius, Theodore, and Sophia, gathered in a cluster, before the cottage-door.

"And what may have brought you here, my young ones?" said the doctor, his face relaxing into its wonted smile. But again looking grave, he added, "Sophia, my beloved, what are those tears?" for we perceived, as we approached, that Sophia was weeping and sobbing, while Eugenius was endeavouring to comfort her.

"She would come here, Sir," replied Eugenius, "though I tried to persuade her not to come; but she promised that she would not cry. She said she wanted to see poor Mary's house, and when she got here, she began to sob and cry, and I could not comfort her."

"Come, come, my little girl," said the

doctor, taking Sophia's hand; "restrain your tears. If you expected that the visit would have this effect upon you, you ought not to have come here: we must not seek occasions of being unhappy, unless they lead us where we can do some good. Poor Mary is in peace now, happier far than we are who are left behind. I must not allow my little girl to give way to over-strained sensibility."

The father spoke decidedly, and I thought him right: but Eugenius reddened, and, looking up to his tutor, he said, "But she can't help it, Sir; please not to be angry."

On hearing these pleadings, the father opened his arms, and Sophia rushed into them, and renewing her sobs, at length she said, "It was the robin, papa; I should not have cried but for the robin."

"What does she mean?" enquired the doctor, looking at Eugenius.

"What do you mean, dear Sophia?" asked Eugenius, bending down tenderly towards her.

Sophia whispered a few words in his

ear, and he then explained the mystery to us.

"It was the sight of poor Mary's favourite robin which made her cry, Sir," said the boy. "You know how Mary loved that robin, and how she fed it every day; and Sophia saw the robin sitting on the ledge of the window in the thatch, and that sight, she says, made her cry; because she feared that the robin would not now be taken care of by the people who are to inhabit the house."

On hearing this, the doctor stooped and embraced his child; but what he said to her I did not hear, for he led her a little way from us, and continued to walk with her till they were beyond the glen. In the mean time, the two young gentlemen having run back to the cottage, I was left alone to follow the doctor at my own pace.

When arrived at the head of the dell, I saw Dr. Beauchamp waiting for me, and nearly as I came up, the young gentlemen overtook us, and I heard them whisper these words of consolation to So-

phia: "Don't cry any more; we have promised to give the people in the cottage twopence a week as long as the robin lives."

A hearty embrace was the reward the delighted little girl gave her two brothers, for this act of kindness; after which, all three went bounding together down the hill towards the parsonage, reminding me of those pretty lines, so applicable to youth,

> "The tear forgot as soon as shed,
> The sunshine of the breast."

I then joined the doctor, who thought it right to account to me for his having spoken harshly, as he called it, to his little girl, saying, "That little sweet one has such strong feelings, and they are so easily excited, that I am sometimes compelled to seem to treat her with coldness, when I would willingly mingle my tears with hers."

"You do right, Sir," I replied, "and I understood your motives before you explained them."

We then walked on to the parsonage, where I spent the remainder of that most interesting afternoon with the sweet family residing there.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BIRTHDAY AT THE MANSION-HOUSE.

The following morning, while I was in the library with Lucy, Mrs. Nuttall, having tapped at the door, entered with much ceremony, to deliver a note from her ladies, the purport of which was to request the honour of my company to dinner at three o'clock on the following Thursday. Having previously requested the duenna to be seated, I hastened to answer this polite invitation, not observing that Miss Lucy was looking over me the whole time I was writing.

"And pray, Miss Lovel," said Mrs. Nuttall, "how long has it been the fashion for young ladies to look over gentlemen's letters?"

Lucy had climbed on the back of my

chair, from which she sprang down on hearing this question, but not with the smallest appearance of detected guilt; and she answered with her usual simplicity, "I was afraid, Mrs. Nuttall, that he would not have accepted the invitation, and I knew that the note was to ask him to dine here on my aunt's birthday."

"Well, and what have I said, Miss Lucy?" I asked.

"You have been very good," she replied, "very good indeed, and I will love you for it."

"But my little lady," I added, "I hope you will remember what Mrs. Nuttall has very properly hinted, that it is not polite to look over people's letters."

The duenna bridled and seemed pleased at this, as I expected; and my sweet Lucy, looking innocently in my face, replied, "Then, Sir, I will not do it any more."

"Well, Sir," said Mrs. Nuttall, as she took my note to carry to her ladies, "I am glad to find that it is a favourable answer I have to bear. Mrs. Winifred's birthday is always a grand occasion. We

have three tables filled, the head table, the steward's table, and that in the servant's hall; besides what is given at the lodge to the poor. But Mrs. Winifred has the spirit of a princess!"

She then swam out of the room.

It cannot be expected, that from this day, which was Monday, my mind could have remained in a very settled state with the prospect of the wonderful event or events which were to take place on Thursday. However, I was very well pleased with the prospect of the new scenes which were to be acted before me on this grand day of festivity.

"I do hope that we may have a fine day to-morrow," said Mrs. Strickland, as she brought in my candles on the Wednesday evening.

"Are you to be at the Hall, Mrs. Strickland?" I asked.

She almost dropped the snuffer-pan on hearing this question, and looking at me with astonishment, "Sir!" she exclaimed; "to be sure, Sir. Why should I not? My husband and I always dine in the steward's

room on Mrs. Helmsley's birthday? But Mr. Griffith, he does not preside neither that day, because he is in the dining-room with the quality, to help to carve. But Mrs. Nuttall, she sits at the head of the table, and Mr. Porter at the bottom, and so we don't have our dinner till it is over in the parlour, and the dessert is sent in; and then we have any nice dish which has not been cut in the parlour, besides other fresh joints. And that which has been cut, Sir, goes to the servants' hall; because you know, Sir, that as we are bettermost sort of people in the steward's room, Mrs. Winifred don't choose that we should be treated with *indignation.*"

"Very judicious and proper," I replied.

At length the auspicious morn arose, and arose auspiciously: not a cloud was visible through the whole expanse of the clear blue ether; the gales of autumn were attempered for the occasion; the trees refused to drop a single leaf. And, as the little man of Roxobel opened his chamber-window, a pleasing omen, big with the anticipation of approaching joys, present-

ed itself to his delighted eyes. This omen was no other than the figure of the Widow Watchum riding up the street, in her usual accoutrements, and displaying an appendage attached to the crupper of her steed, which, no doubt, contained a supply of more splendid habiliments. Onward she proceeded, and the eyes of the stranger followed the omen till it arrived at the door of the Helmsley Arms, where anon it disappeared. But I fear that I am growing too poetical; and apprehending that I might in the end intrude on the privileges of Mr. Pen Map, the poet laureat of Roxobel, I will endeavour to descend to humble prose.

The morning passed away as other mornings do. But, at two o'clock, Mrs. Strickland looked in at my door, and said, "Sir, it will be time soon for you to start for the Hall, for the ladies are very particular about hours."

I sprang up from my book, hastened to equip myself in a new suit of plain black, for I always prefer black, and having assumed my silk stockings and pumps, and

placed my cocked hat under my arm, I was ready "to start," to use a word of Mrs. Strickland's, precisely ten minutes before three o'clock, calculating that I had a chance of being too soon after all.

In my progress towards the house of entertainment, I saw not a single living creature, with the exception of Mrs. Strickland and Mrs. Goodwill, whom I left behind me; Mrs. Strickland having, I believe, determined to see me fairly out of the house before she and her party quitted it. When I knocked at the door of the Hall, it was opened to me by Mr. Porter, on whose physiognomy were traced deep lines of care and consequence, the attributes of high authority. His walk before me, as we traversed the hall and ascended the stairs, indicated the importance of the occasion, and admonished me to assume my best drawing-room manners.

At length, the leaf of an immense folding-door in the lobby being opened, my consequential conductor announced "Mr. Airley," and I walked forward along a superb Brussels carpet, in the face of an awful

circle, consisting of several ladies arranged in due form, and according to their respective precedence, on the one side, and as many gentlemen on the other.

I am not quite certain whether the old-fashioned magnificence of the exalted apartment into which I had been ushered, with its rich carvings and gildings, its lofty mantlepiece, its damask hangings, its china vases, and its massive chairs and sofas, was not altogether more imposing to my mind than the extraordinary perfections of the phalanx of ladies already drawn up to receive my compliments.

I have hinted before, though somewhat obscurely, that I am not wholly unacquainted with courts; and it will therefore be supposed, that I am able, on becoming occasions, to use similar formalities to those which are requisite in a royal residence. It accordingly occurred to me, as I entered the august presence of the Mrs. Helmsleys, on this most important occasion, that I could not do better than display, at this time, some specimens of my courtly breeding. With this intention, I

advanced towards Mrs. Winifred, the queen of the day, who sat at the upper end of the room, in a large chair, which was more than filled by the circumference of her ample petticoat of rich brocaded silk, and bowed before her, till my head, which is never elevated very far above the earth, was bent down almost to her knees. I then proceeded to pay my compliments, the same in kind but different in degree, to the two junior Mrs. Helmsleys, who sat beside her, and I then passed on to the other ladies, namely, Mrs. Beauchamp, the three Misses Finchley, and two strangers, whose names I do not remember, and in whom I noticed nothing worthy of particular description, excepting that one was stout, and the other slender, and that both sat as if awe-struck and silence-struck by the enormous splendour with which they found themselves encompassed.

Having thus conducted myself, as I trusted, to the general satisfaction of the company, I turned round to the gentlemen, and discovered that this division of our party consisted of Dr. Beauchamp,

the steward, Mr. Barnaby Semple, Eugenius and Theodore, and four other gentlemen, (as I chose to designate them,) namely, two young and two old ones, who, as I afterwards found, appertained to the stranger ladies, each being able to claim one husband and one son.

It is impossible, that conversation should flag in the presence of Dr. Beauchamp. I was scarcely seated, before he began upon some subject which seemed to set most of the party at ease: in consequence of which, the five minutes we had to sit before dinner, passed off as easily as possible.

At length, the solemn Mr. Porter announced the dinner, and the ladies filed off according to precedence out of the room and down stairs, the gentlemen following; although there was some demur respecting the place I was to hold in the procession, which was settled by the doctor, who insisted on my marching first.

The dining-room at the Hall is a noble apartment, and the dinner was set out in a magnificent old style; but we should again

have discovered our want of conversation, had it not been for the doctor, who talked with precisely the same freedom as he would have used in his own study, though he was ill supported by any one but Mrs. Winifred, for the residue of the visiters, especially the ladies, seemed to be all awed into perfect taciturnity. However, we did pretty well, even during the first course; and when the second course appeared, we were helped on by several of the gentlemen. We were also repeatedly assisted, during a dearth of ideas, by Mrs. Grizzy and Mrs. Judy, who never once so far departed from their characters of echoes, as to hazard a sentiment of their own; although they failed not to repeat, in different tones, all that their elder sister said, or, at least, the last clause of every speech which she made; by which services, they at any rate, prevented that most awkward of all awkward things in a mixed company, namely, an English moment, or, in other words, a dead silence.

At length, the second and third courses being removed, the dessert being set on the

table, and the servants having withdrawn, the door was again opened, and the lovely little ladies, Lucy and Sophia, entered the room. Sophia was simply, and therefore elegantly, dressed in white; but my Lucy was arrayed in a profusion of finery. She wore a transparent gauze, underneath which was another drapery of rose colour, and she was likewise bedizened with lace, riband, artificial flowers, and even jewels; all assumed, on this most important day, for the honour of the House of Helmsley. Yet I soon saw, and saw with pleasure, that as far as concerned the little lady herself, all these fine ornaments were entirely thrown away: for there was not the smallest indication in her expressive countenance, of being conscious that she was smarter than another; not the least intimation that she had discovered this to be a day in which she stood a chance of being noticed, and of being set up by her inferiors as the niece of the great ladies of Roxobel. She entered the room, and came forward with the same easy and unaffected grace, with which she used to accost me in a morning, in the library. She

answered every one who spoke to her, with kindness, and even with affection, and then seated herself in the chair which was offered to her near the ladies, with that sort of animated politeness, which seemed to be the result of the warmest and most extensive feelings of Christian love.

And now, the ladies who had hitherto sat as if they had been tongue-tied, or as if it were painful to them to utter even a formal monosyllable, began to level their flatteries at the little lady. "How charming Miss Lovel looks today! Dear Miss Lovel, I was afraid we should not have seen you. How pretty! how becoming! how delicate! how well fancied! What beautiful lace! what sweet trimming!" and so on; while Mrs. Winifred and her sisters qualified and deducted, as mothers and aunts often do on such occasions; each qualification and each deduction being thrice repeated, till every piece of flattery was rung four several times in the child's ears. I certainly did expect to find that my favourite's simplicity would not be proof against all this, and I looked

with apprehension, lest I should see some symptoms of beginning conceit or affectation: I looked however in vain; no change passed on that sweet face, no affected motion was imparted to that fair head; and I was obliged at last to bring my mind to the conclusion, that Lucy had no faculty by which she could make any thing, either good or bad, of flattery; and that she only considered its language as being a sort of mode by which one person endeavours to make another comprehend that he or she is dear to him.

In the mean time, I could not help remarking the great distinction which Mrs. Winifred made between Lucy and Eugenius; her behaviour to Lucy was even caressing, but to Eugenius she was only distantly polite. It struck me that this might originate in some lingering resentment against the father of these young people, for Eugenius is said to be the very picture of his father.

Mrs. Winifred also paid every kind and polite attention to little Sophia, whom she caused to be placed on one side of her,

while Lucy occupied a seat on the other; in consequence of which arrangement, Miss Beauchamp obtained a share of the compliments which fell from the visiters.

At length, Mrs. Winifred made a movement, and with her all the ladies and the young people. I flew to the door; I opened it, and bowed lowly and severally to the ladies as they passed, and then closing the door after them, I returned to the gentlemen.

Mr. Jeffry Griffith was in the act of crossing his legs and throwing himself back in his chair as I came back to the table, by which motions we were made to understand that we were now to consider all formality at an end, and to make ourselves easy and comfortable for the next half-hour.

"The bottle stands with you, Mr. Airley," were the first words of the steward, as I sat down.

"We are at liberty here, Mr. Griffith, I presume, to do as we please with respect to taking wine?" I replied.

The steward rather hesitated: on which the doctor said, "My good Mr. Airley, Mr.

Griffith is a friend of liberty, I know, and wishes all his guests to make themselves comfortable." And upon this he appealed to the rest of the party, by whom he was upheld, though somewhat coldly.

Dr. Beauchamp and I then passed the wine from before us; and the doctor, who is certainly the most universally agreeable man in conversation whom I ever met with, began some long tale exactly suited to the capacity of his audience. This relation, though not in the least low or vulgar, was yet excessively amusing, and was moreover interspersed with some of the finest Christian sentiments, which burst in here and there upon his narrative, like the rays of meridian glory through the vistas of a shady coppice.

In the mean time, the decanters were very active, and I think that I had the honour of giving them eight or ten moves in the space of half-an-hour; at the expiration of which time, that most respectable and important personage, Mr. Porter, announced the infusion of the Chinese herb.

We immediately obeyed the summons,

in order that we might not be deficient in politeness to the Mrs. Helmsleys. The post of honour was again assigned me; and as we filed off through the hall and up the great stairs, I could not help comparing myself to some little fifer or drummer preceding a line of recruits.

At length, the folding-doors of the drawing-room were thrown open by Mr. Porter, (who was ever alive to the duties of his office,) and we entered; and some of us being inspired by the juice of the grape, and others by the exhilarating influence of the ladies' smiles, we ventured to intermingle ourselves among the fair ones of the company, and to take our places here and there, on sofas, chairs, or stools, as our will inclined, or as circumstances permitted.

As Lucy and Sophia were without the circle, deeply engaged in conversation with their companions, Eugenius and Theodore, while Mrs. Beauchamp was entrenched between two of the Misses Finchley, I was driven, rather by a sort of repelling force exercised upon me by the rest of the ladies,

than by any inherent quality of attraction possessed by the person herself, to ensconce myself in an immense chair next to Mrs. Winifred, who was undoubtedly by far the least unpleasant female in the room, after those whose names I have just mentioned. She immediately entered into conversation with me in a very lively manner; and the doctor bringing his forces in the same direction, our corner became very animated, and Mrs. Winifred laughed very heartily, each merry peal being repeated in fainter murmurs by the ever ready echoes on her left.

In the mean time, the steward, who had swallowed down with his wine his usual awe of his household goddesses, (that is to say, the Mrs. Helmsleys,) and Mr. Barnaby Semple, who was in some degree similarly circumstanced, made themselves very busy among the ladies, in handing the cake, which they took off from the massive silver salvers held by the footmen, for the purpose of shewing their superior gallantry. They likewise added to this piece of service various other little attentions, such as

are often very useful in varying the tedium of an afternoon visit, and in passing away some awkward moments.

At length, all appearances of tea, cake, coffee, and salvers, having passed away, there was a kind of pause, during which the ladies busied themselves in drawing on their gloves.

"Mr. Airley," said Mrs. Winifred, who always treated me with great respect, "you will not, I hope, be offended at our old-fashioned custom: but as this is a sort of gala-day, which comes only once a year, we always conclude it with a dance, and in this dance every respectable person who has been invited to the several tables is allowed to mingle. It has been a custom in the family from our grandfather's time, and one from which we never depart."

"Yes," repeated Mrs. Grizzy; "it was a custom in the family in our grandfather's time, and one from which we never depart."

"From which we never depart," re-echoed Mrs. Judy.

"And why should you, ladies?" I repli-

ed, "since it makes the poor people happy: and though I am not myself a dancer, yet I shall have great amusement in witnessing the scene."

Mrs. Winifred politely expressed her regret at my never dancing, saying, "Really, Mr. Airley, I am sure you can dance, and well, too. I cannot be mistaken in the carriage of one who is well acquainted with that elegant accomplishment."

"Well acquainted with that elegant accomplishment," said Mrs. Grizzy.

"Elegant accomplishment," said Mrs. Judy.

My accomplishments having thus become the topic of discourse, my name was taken up by the row of ladies on my left, beginning with Miss Finchley and running round the whole circle, or, I should rather say, half-circle, and various complimentary speeches were uttered, all together composing the following sentence.—"What a pity it is that Mr. Airley doesn't dance! Surely Mr. Airley could dance delight-·lly if he would! Mr. Airley is made for cing! Can no one induce Mr. Airley

to dance? Miss Betty, cannot you persuade Mr. Airley to dance? Beaux are so scarce, that Mr. Airley ought to dance. I think we ladies should force Mr. Airley to dance."

To all this it was necessary for me to be modestly inattentive; but when I heard that Miss Betty was to try her persuasive powers, I became more than modestly inattentive, I became obstinately so, and said to myself, "Pshaw! if they wanted me to dance, they should bribe me with one of those little fairies at the other end of the room, the rosebud, or the lily, and none of their Miss Bettys. I would not dance now, even if I had intended it before."

And now again the folding-doors were opened, and Mr. Porter announced the readiness of every thing in the next apartment for the opening of the ball.

Mrs. Winifred immediately offered her hand to me. "Mr. Airley," she said, "as you and I are neither of us dancers, I shall claim you for my beau for the evening, and we will, if you please, lead the way."

I arose and bowed, for I had determined

to be the very pink of courtesy during the whole evening: and we walked forward in grand style, the company retreating to the right and left as we approached; I being now transformed, in my own mind, from the little fifer to the court-page handing his sovereign princess from one royal hall into another.

We crossed an extensive lobby, where I distinguished groups of persons crowded together to give us room to pass, Mr. Porter going before us with two waxen tapers, and were introduced into a large upper room, which had been prepared for dancing by being stripped of all its furniture, with the exception of a sofa and some chairs. It was brilliantly illuminated, and in one corner was a temporary stage erected for the band, which consisted of a tabor and pipe, and several violins.

Mrs. Winifred and I seated ourselves on the sofa; and I prepared my mind for much amusement. We had so far preceded the rest of the company, that we had taken our places a minute or two before any one appeared.

"I see you are prepared to be amused, Mr. Airley," said Mrs. Winifred, smiling.

"I am, Madam," I replied, "and to be pleased too. This is entirely a new scene to me, and a very agreeable one."

At that moment the doctor entered, with the two waiting-maids of Juno, alias, Mrs. Judy, and Mrs. Grizzy; who came swimming into the room, as goddesses ought to do. I looked with some apprehension lest the doctor should set them near me; but he was merciful, and placed them at a considerable distance; and then coming round, he seated himself on my left.

These arrangements were hardly completed, before the company began to enter. And first and fairest, came two lovely young couples, Lucy and Theodore, Sophia and Eugenius. These little fairies would hardly have bent a blade of grass, so lightly did they step to their places. They took their station at the upper end of the room: for Mrs. Winifred never allowed any one, on this annual occasion, to take precedence of the members of the family. The eyes of all four sparkled with unmin-

gled delight, and those of the two young ladies were more than once directed to me, as if to intreat that I would sympathize in happiness so rare and complete. In that gay moment, indeed, not one worldly or ambitious idea, not one emotion of pride, not one envious thought, not one care for the future, appeared to disturb their peaceful breasts.

"If all dancers were like these little ones," thought I, "a ball-room would be a place of harmless enjoyment, at least. But when earthly passions mingle in our meetings, there is scarcely a more dangerous and trying situation for a young mind than the assembly-room, where, in the course of the country-dance, there is so much opportunity for the disclosure and the display of some of those feelings, which it ought to be our endeavour as well as our duty, not only to conceal from others, but even, if possible, from ourselves."—But the company is waiting; and it is my business to usher them in.

The thin lady and the thick lady now appeared, each being handed in by the son

of her companion. And these grotesque couples placed themselves, as if for foils, next to the blooming pairs who occupied the superior stations. Then followed Mr. Jeffry Griffith, with Miss Finchley, Mr. Barnaby Semple with Miss Kitty, and the amiable Miss Betty with my friend Mr. Claypole, of whose presence at the Hall I was, till then, wholly unawares. But, no doubt, he had been a guest at the second table; and perchance, had I solicited the honour of Miss Betty's hand, as had been suggested, I should have disconcerted a long-laid plan, and, as the French would have said, on such an occasion, I should perhaps have destroyed the union of two devoted hearts, and made the misery of two most amiable personages.

I hope that I shall be excused, if in describing the events of Mrs. Winifred's birthday I should occasionally fall into a style more florid and more elevated than is usual with me. Though, by the by, I should have said *rise*, instead of *fall*, because people do not commonly fall into things more elevated than themselves. I mention this for the

benefit of those who may hereafter read these most wonderful and entertaining memorandums.

And now, having arranged and provided for all those ladies of our society who were thought worthy to dine on china and plate, I proceed to the second degree. The next couple which entered, were Mrs. Taylor, attended by Mr. Pen Map, which worthy pair, as they came up the room, sunk and bowed, with much grace, to Mrs. Winifred. Mrs. Taylor was prodigiously fine, as respected the colours of her variegated dress; though as to the cut and fashion of it, it seemed very similar to those in which she usually appeared. Some other couples now approached, none of whom particularly attracted my attention. But I was quite thrown off my guard by the three next who entered, and fairly broke out into a loud chuckle. These were the miller and the Widow Watchum, the gamekeeper's wife and Black Tom, and the miller's lady, set forth in all the colours of the rainbow, with a partner, who, by the by, I thought too good for her, namely,

young Robert Taylor, who scarcely came up to her shoulder, for she is immensely tall, at least she appeared to be so with her high heels and her very high cap.

At the bottom of the dance, was a heterogeneous mass of housemaids, footmen, and inferior persons; and on chairs, at the lower end of the room, sat many decent matrons of the parish, for whom I had so much regard, that I was glad to see that they did not offer to join in the dance. Among these last, were Mrs. Strickland, and Mrs. Goodwill with Ellen by her side. There were fewer elderly men in the room than elderly women, from which circumstance I inferred, that there was a party drinking, and perhaps smoking, with Mr. Porter, the old coachman, and some other of the grey-headed domestics.

When most of the party were assembled, I missed two persons of consequence, namely, Mrs. Nuttall and her nephew Taffy. The housekeeper appeared first, dressed in stiff silk and fine laces, in no degree inferior to those of her ladies; and, with ten times their consequence of man-

ner, she walked up the room, spoke familiarly to the ladies at the head of the dance, with the air of one who has no fear of giving offence, and walked back again to the lower end of the apartment.

Miss Lucy was now asked to name the dance, and she mentioned "The Bed of Roses," which I thought not quite *apropos*, as I saw but two flowers in the whole parterre, and of those one only was a rose, or rather a rosebud, the other being a lily of the valley. The musicians had scarcely begun to try the tune, when Master Taffy abruptly entered, pursued by Miss Esther Stephens, a well-matched pair, I thought, at any rate. These young people pushed boldly into the set, and took their places next to Sophia and Eugenius.

"What now, Sir?" said the steward, sharply, addressing Taffy: "take your proper place; don't come here."

Taffy stared at him, but made no reply.

"Don't come here, Taffy," said Eugenius; "you have no business here."

Taffy on one side, and Miss Esther on the other, stood their ground.

There was some little delay respecting the air which was to be played; and during this interval, the dispute continued between the steward and Taffy; Mr. Griffith having, as I before hinted, made rather deep libations to the mighty Bromius.

At length, the musicians "having found tongue," (to use an expression which I caught during the evening from Black Tom,) Mrs. Winifred called to the young people, rather sharply I thought, to mind the dance, and not quarrel about places; and Master Taffy was left to enjoy his triumph without further molestation, although the steward looked exceedingly black upon the occasion.

While the dance had extended no lower than the first two couples, or even the first three, it was pleasing in the extreme: the little fairies skipped about with so much grace and ease, and looked so happy and so lovely, that I could hardly take my eyes from them. But when the agitation was communicated to the other couples, and the whole party was set in motion, all in their turns being brought in contrast with the blooming and sparkling Lucy, the ele-

gant and modest Sophia, the graceful Eugenius, and the animated Theodore, the scene became irresistibly ridiculous. My politeness, indeed, was so overcome, that I fairly laughed aloud, in which breach of good manners I was joined by the doctor, who exclaimed, "Good souls, how they foot it! it is better than any comedy that was ever represented." The sound of the music, and the measured beating of the many heavy feet, however, was much in our favour, and prevented our merry comments from being heard. By this time, too, every one was so busy, or so warm, that we were very little noticed. And, in addition to these propitious circumstances, we were made more easy by the example of Mrs. Winifred herself, who was a little thrown off her guard at the figure of Mrs. Watchum, whom the miller was twisting under his arm in the first style. Mrs. Winifred informed me, that Mr. Tolly is considered a superlatively fine dancer in his own society: and indeed, his steps seemed perfectly true to the music, and a great deal of skill was displayed in his capers.

In the progress of my observations on this dance, (which I must inform those who may hereafter read my memorandums was the first of the kind that I had ever seen,) I was, however, led to make several reflections of a serious nature. It appears to me to be not unreasonable that occasions should be afforded to the various ranks of society to intermingle with each other for the purposes of innocent festivity; since such an intercourse, properly regulated, might tend to make them feel their joint participation in one common nature, and their mutual dependence on each other for rational enjoyment. On such occasions, however, care should be taken not to excite in the lower classes those feelings which might lead to lawless freedom and familiarity, or to an unrestrained display of the coarseness of their characters, in the presence of their superiors.

The contempt of superiors, now so prevalent in England, has a morally bad effect on the lower classes. It is closely connected with a contempt of government, and a disregard of religious obligations: and

hence it has sometimes been a subject of enquiry with me, whether frequent visits to the poor, excepting in cases of illness or affliction, are generally productive of the good effects which many are led to expect from them. This, however, is a query, which I leave to other and wiser persons to answer.

On the present occasion, as the evening advanced, I saw more and more of the evil consequences of the excitement which was caused by the dancing and music in this ill-assorted assembly. The men, who at first had not dared to open their mouths, began to talk and to laugh aloud, and the women were emboldened to answer them; and after the first few dances had been called, and the genteeler persons were removed to the bottom of the set, dances of a coarser kind were introduced, with clapping of hands and snapping of fingers, in time to the music.

In the mean while, Mrs. Winifred had withdrawn into another room, accompanied by one or two of the other ladies, who had complained of fatigue; but I re-

mained with the doctor and Mrs. Beauchamp in the dancing-room, agreeing with them that our best occupation was to watch the little ladies.

The dancing had continued without intermission for three hours, when the inferior members of the company were called out to take refreshments; and cake and wine, lemonade and punch, were handed round to the quality, who remained in the room. I was still seated on the sofa, and the two little ladies came to sit by me. They were full of the happiness which they had enjoyed, and Lucy told me with glee, that Sophia was to stay with her till Monday; "and you will have two instead of one of us to teach, Mr. Airley."

While I was expressing the pleasure I should experience in having two such scholars, Master Taffy entered the room, and coming up to the sofa, "Miss Lucy," he said, "we are to change partners now, and you must dance with me."

"Indeed I shan't, Taffy," replied the little lady.

"But Mrs. Winifred says we are to

change partners now; and there is nobody but me young enough for you to dance with," rejoined Taffy.

"Well, but I am engaged," answered the little lady.

"But you are not to dance with the same all the evening," returned young Nuttall.

"I know that," replied Miss Lucy; "but I have secured another partner, and so has Sophia; and therefore you need not trouble yourself about us."

"You mayn't dance with your brothers neither," said Taffy.

"Who says so?" asked Lucy: "we will, if we like it."

"But you mayn't though," replied the boy: "it a'n't the custom."

"It is not your affair, Master Taffy," said little Sophia, reddening. "If we like our brothers best, what can it matter to you? I shall dance with Theodore, and Lucy with Eugenius."

"Now, is that fair?" said Taffy, looking at me.

"I don't see why it is not," I replied. "If the young ladies wish to dance with their

brothers, surely they have a right to do so."

"What's that you are talking of?" said Eugenius, suddenly appearing.

"He wants to dance with me," answered Lucy.

"That's what you shall not do," exclaimed Eugenius, seizing his sister's hand; "she is my partner, and she shall dance with me."

At that moment the steward entered, and seemed as if he had been adding to his libations; for he no sooner heard what was passing, than he took Master Taffy by the shoulders, and turned him off to another end of the room, while Eugenius remained, muttering at the insolence of the boy.

When the dancing recommenced, I saw young Nuttall standing opposite to the gamekeeper's daughter, his former partner; but they both looked sullen.

From that time things proceeded as before, till the dance previous to that which was to be the closing one; during which, I was startled by a noise at the bottom of the room. The musicians played a few false notes, and then ceased en-

tirely; the dancing was also stopped; and nothing was heard but voices in high altercation. The voices were those of Theodore and Taffy.

"I will!"—"You shan't!"—"You are a fine gentleman!"—"You are a true-born blackguard!"—"I'll make you feel!"—"I'll make you remember!" Then a blow resounded—then another—and then another—and then followed a noisy scuffle, in which the two boys dealt blows upon each other with the rapidity of mill-wheels.

This scene, so congenial to Black Tom and the miller, threw both these heroes off their guard. The Hall, with its dazzling pomp and magnificence, seemed to have disappeared in an instant from their view, and, no doubt, they already began to fancy themselves in some of their lowest haunts.

"Well done! well done!" cried Black Tom.

"Well done!" exclaimed the miller. "To and again, Master Theodore! Pay him well! Give it him downright! There, right forward! On and again! Pay him off! Pay him off!"

The women shrieked; the children cried; and little Sophia, in her agony, fell on her knees, and prayed that the boys might not kill each other.

The steward and Mr. Barnaby Semple had much difficulty in parting the combatants; and, when they had succeeded in parting them, they had still more difficulty in holding them in. Theodore was like a lion in the toils struggling to be free, champing, foaming, and gnashing his teeth; his face flushed, and wet with perspiration; his hair disordered; his eyes flashing fire: while Taffy snuffled and sniffled, muttering vengeance on his opponent, and, now and then, making a furious effort to get loose.

While things were in this state, Mrs. Winifred and her sisters, with Dr. and Mrs. Beauchamp, who had only gone out for a few moments, entered the room, followed by Mrs. Nuttall, and by several other persons who had been summoned by the noise.

"What is all this?" said Mrs. Winifred, in high displeasure.

"He struck me," said Taffy, pointing to young Beauchamp.

"And I will again, when I can reach him," said Theodore.

"Peace, boy!" exclaimed the doctor, in high indignation. "Do you take this house for a bear-garden?"

"It is not his fault, papa," said Sophia, weeping bitterly. "Poor Theodore, it is not his fault."

"It's mine! all mine!" exclaimed Eugenius. "I ought not to have told him, and then this would not have happened."

"Told him what?" was enquired from various quarters.

"About my dancing!"—"About his dancing!"—"About our dancing!" said several young impatient voices, at once.

"He struck me, that he did," said Taffy.

"Yes, because you touched Lucy; and you sha'n't touch her!" exclaimed Theodore.

"And why mayn't I touch her?" asked Taffy.

"You wanted to dance with her, that you did," rejoined Theodore.

"Come, come," said Mrs. Winifred; "no more of this in this place. We are disturbing these good people. David, go to your aunt, and let me hear no more."—And, so saying, she walked away in high displeasure. The doctor, at the same time, led the four young people into another room, and I followed them.

"Come," said the doctor, when the door was shut, "I must have all this explained to me."

I then related what I supposed to have been the beginning of the affray, namely, the conversation which had taken place while the little ladies were seated by my side. Eugenius also added his part.

"I was very imprudent, Sir," he said, "in telling Theodore that Taffy had spoken about Lucy's dancing with him; and when Taffy came to our place in the dance, he again said something to Lucy about dancing with him the next; and Theodore said she should not; and then Taffy said she should."

"And then I said I would not," added Lucy; "and then Taffy said I should."

"And then I fetched him a blow," said Theodore.

"And then he gave you another?" added the doctor. "And the end of it is, that you have disgraced yourself; you have lost the good opinion of Mrs. Winifred; and Eugenius, Lucy, Theodore, and Sophia, will be parted henceforward."

As the doctor uttered these words, the tears gushed from his eyes, he sank on a chair, and sobbed audibly. The four children rushed into his arms; and the cry of anguish was universal and exceedingly affecting.

"There is only one thing now to be done," observed the doctor, after some reflection. "Theodore must beg Mrs. Winifred's pardon without loss of time. Eugenius is out of the scrape, and let him remain so."

"No, Sir, no, I am not," said Eugenius.

"Take my advice," said the doctor: "keep in the back-ground till called upon. You will then, I am sure, be ready to do all that is required of you."

"I would do any thing, I would die, rather than be separated from Theodore and

Sophia!" exclaimed the charming boy, bursting afresh into tears, "and from you, my father and my friend, and my beloved mother;"—and he again sank on the bosom of the doctor.

In the mean time, Sophia and Lucy had each taken a hand of Theodore, and were drawing him out of the room towards Mrs. Winifred.

"Follow them, my friend," said the doctor to me, "we must avert the consequences of this folly, if possible."

I willingly obeyed, and, hastening after the young people, saw them enter the drawing-room, and advance with quick steps to Mrs. Winifred. Then, falling on their knees before the old lady, Lucy spoke first, saying, "We are come to ask your pardon, aunt. Theodore is very, very sorry."

"Poor Theodore is very, very sorry," repeated Sophia.

"I have done wrong, Ma'am; will you please to pardon me," said the boy: "and if you will call Taffy, I will tell him so in your presence, and I will shake hands with him before all the people."

"Yes, Ma'am," rejoined Lucy, "he will shake hands with him before all the people. Please to forgive him."

"Please to forgive him," added the sobbing Sophia.

"Certainly," replied Mrs. Winifred. "I cannot refuse to forgive Master Beauchamp, if he is willing to make such honourable amends to the poor boy whom he has insulted. But I have another condition to make, Lucy. Will you dance with David, and thus prove before all the company that you do not despise him?"

I dreaded the result of this question, or rather command. It brought the colour into the face of Theodore, but he refrained from speaking.

"I will, Ma'am," replied Lucy, "if my partner ——" and there she hesitated.

"Will give you up?" said Mrs. Winifred. "I can, however, hardly suppose," she added, haughtily, "that any person in this house would dare to oppose my wishes in this particular. Things, however, may be altered since my youth. But this matter may be soon ascertained." Then address-

ing her niece, and looking at Theodore, "Is this your partner, Lucy Lovel?" she said.

"No, Ma'am," replied Lucy, "Eugenius is my partner."

"Let him be called," said Mrs. Winifred.

I immediately ran out to apprize Eugenius of what was required of him.

"I expected this," observed the doctor: "and now, Eugenius, it is your turn to shew how far you will go to make peace."

"What ought I to do, Sir?" asked Eugenius, trembling with restrained feeling. "If I were older ——" and he hesitated. "But I shall be older ——" And then again striving to obtain self-command, he said, "Please, Mr. Airley, to tell my aunt that I am willing."

"You must go yourself, Eugenius," said the doctor, "if you wish to undo the mischief which your impatience has done."

Eugenius obeyed. He went to the drawing-room, and I accompanied him. Mrs. Nuttall and her nephew were then there.

"Eugenius," said Mrs. Winifred, "David wishes to dance this last dance with your sister Lucy. Will you give her up?"

"I will do what you wish, Madam," replied Eugenius. "You have a right to command me."

"Well, then," returned Mrs. Winifred, "all is as it should be." Then addressing the housekeeper, she added, "The young gentleman has made a proper apology to your nephew, Nuttall. The boy is not much hurt, you say, and you ought to be satisfied. Taffy, take your partner; and I will go in and see the concluding dance."

Lucy's fair face flushed high as Taffy took her hand to lead her out. Mrs. Winifred followed with the other ladies, and I remained with Sophia, her brother, and Eugenius.

"Oh, Mr. Airley," said Eugenius, "why do I feel this so much? Where is the pride of the Helmsleys and the Lovels now?"

"The pride of the Helmsleys is like all other pride, Eugenius," I answered, "which generally ends in abasement. Your good aunt is infatuated by an artful waiting-woman; and hence the influence of her nephew: but the circumstance is not worth a thought; and by saying much, and think-

ing much about it, you give it importance. Don't shew yourself mortified. As Theodore has robbed you of your partner, let him give you his, and let us see if little Sophia cannot comfort you."

Sophia had shrunk from young Lovel during this conversation, being awed by his serious looks, but she now drew near, and said, in her sweetest tone, "Come, dear Eugenius, don't be uneasy; Mrs. Winifred has pardoned us, and we may be happy again now: and if Theodore will only wait a moment, I will fetch such a partner for him as I know he will like next best to me."

So saying, she darted out of the room, and presently returned with the little black-eyed Ellen, who had been sitting all the evening by the side of her grandmother.

"Well done, Sophia!" cried Theodore. "You have done better than I expected; but I doubt whether she knows one step of the dance."

"O yes, Sir," said the little girl. "Yes, I can make steps. And Miss Sophia says I am to follow her, and to follow you, Sir; and to go up, and to go down, and to go

in, and to go out; and I think I can manage."

"To be sure you can," said Theodore, whose spirits were now nearly as high as ever. "Only come with us; we shall do vastly well. It's Sir Roger de Coverley, is not it, that we are going to dance? Make haste, or we shall be too late." Then taking his little partner by the hand, he flew out of the room with such an air that I ventured to predict that the drubbing he had already gotten would not be the last by many to which this enterprising youth would entitle himself.

Lucy Lovel and David Nuttall had just taken their station at the upper end of the room, when Eugenius and Theodore led their little partners to the bottom; and Taffy seemed somewhat perplexed, and the company much amused, when it was found that it was little Ellen with whom David was to execute all the manœuvres which form a part of the figure of the old dance of Sir Roger de Coverley. The presence, however, of Mrs. Winifred, kept every one in order; and no comments were made.

The dance was soon concluded, a party broke up immediately afterw though I have reason to believe that kept up their hilarity in the steward's and the servants' hall, till the dawn of following morning.

Though it was long after my usual ti when I retired to rest, I could not slee My cogitations were numerous and per plexing. I could not understand how Mrs. Nuttall could possess so powerful an influence over her mistress, as was discovered in the anxiety which Mrs. Winifred had evidenced, to make her own nephew and niece humble themselves, in order to please the nephew of her housekeeper. Neither had it escaped my notice, that Mrs. Grizzy and Mrs. Judy had both looked extremely blank while their niece was dancing with young Nuttall.

I had my thoughts, too, respecting the sort of amusement which had taken place that evening at the Hall; and I felt that the English are not the kind of people to whom such amusements can be permitted with impunity.

Bull, when uneducated, ... sulky though he has many good qualities; when he lays aside his s...ness, ecomes free and familiar. Neither ve, who have been educated, know so l how to manage our amusements, as r friends do over the water. A balle ampêtre in France would never degenerate into such low scenes as I have described as taking place in Roxobel Ha... And there is something in the different style of dancing which prevails in the two nations: the French quadrille admitting of better selection than the English country-da..ce, and being less liable to si into inelegance.

Such were my musings; and before I fell asleep, I decided, in my own mind, that I had not as yet seen any thing at Roxobel which had pleased me so little as the ball at the mansion-house.

END OF VOL. I.

